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ABSTRACT

According to the "Arizona English Bulletin" (AEB), not enough attention is given to humor or satire in high school English classes. AEB suggests that if the English class is a place for bringing reality into the curriculum, humor must become a part of the total English program. Featured in this issue are 25 essays on various aspects of humor and satire, including humor in literature, background to humor, short films using parody and satire, teaching Shakespearean comedy, writing humor, graffiti, comic books and strips, some problems in teaching satire, and comedy in radio. Sample parodies written by English teachers and a bibliography of books on humor and satire are also included. (LL)

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1. Papers should ordinarily run no more than 10-12 pages, typed, double-spaced.
2. Writers who wish to submit brief notes should consider them for the Shoptalk section of a particular issue.
3. Avoid footnotes, unless they are absolutely necessary.
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ARIZONA ENGLISH BULLETIN

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Preface to the Issue - - - - - - - HUMOR AND SATIRE IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

Rafael Sabatini, bestselling author of swashbuckling novels of the 1910's and 1920's now unhappily forgotten, opened his best work SCARAMOUCHE with these words describing his hero, "He was born with a gift of laughter and a sense that the world was mad." Those words ought to be considered carefully by English teachers. Students too are born with a gift of laughter (though many of them have all too little to laugh about) and they soon sense that a spirit of madness does seem to pervade the world. We all praise the man with an ability to laugh at the world and himself, but we may be guilty of giving lip-service for we give our students all too little opportunity to laugh in our classes. Perhaps we are driven by the puritan or protestant ethic that exalts hard work and decries laughter. For too many English teachers, class time is for learning and thinking and pondering and worrying and confronting, not time for being amused. One tipoff to the lack of time or consideration we give humor or satire may be those English methods texts used to train future teachers. Check one (or all of them) to find how little is said about humor or satire and their importance in the classroom.

Possibly, just possibly, we might consider spending more time with literature or films that are fun, not necessarily relevant or viable or meaningful or deep or heavy, just fun. If we prize much in life that is heavy or deep or meaningful, much that keeps us sane is not necessarily deep or serious. Humor does appeal to young people, as does satire, as does parody,note the continuing popularity of MAD or the NATIONAL LAMPOON or many comic strips. These are, as graduation-time orators are wont to tell us, serious times, times of challenge, times that try men's souls, times when our very civilization is threatened. These are, as those doomsayers are wont to forget, also times when man needs desperately to laugh, when man will be far better able to face difficulties if he can sometimes forget them by laughing. We do need our Miltons and our Tennysons today, but we need just as badly our Mort Sahls and Bill Cosbys and Bob Newharts, satirists and humorists that give us perspective and a feeling that survival is not just an animal instinct for preservation but instead a human drive to improve, that survival is somehow worth its cost. Maybe teachers might consider doing something more with Mark Twain than using those horrible snippets in far too many anthologies. Twain was both humorist and satirist, frequently simultaneously, and works like THE ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN or THE CONNECTICUT YANKEE IN KING ARTHUR'S COURT or "The War Prayer" or "Eve's Diary" or THE MYSTERIOUS STRANGER could give students insights into Twain's ability to laugh at and laugh with his fellow mortals. Bringing in the humor and satire of writers as dissimilar as Joseph Heller (CATCH-22), E.B. White (almost anything from THE SECOND TREE FROM THE CORNER), Kurt Vonnegut (CAT'S CRADLE or SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE) or James Thurber (just about anything at all), Leonard Wibberly (THE MOUSE THAT ROARED), Evelyn Waugh (THE LOVED ONE), or Richard Armour (THE TWISTED TALES FROM SHAKESPEARE <u>after</u> students have read the original plays and then only) might enliven a class and make clear why man had such a desperate need to laugh. Indeed, why not read something aloud (always good for both teacher and student <u>if</u> the teacher selects carefully and reads well) today that's funny or witty or biting just because kids might like it. That's justification enough. Unhappily, in some classes it would also be uncommon enough. These are serious times, but students can be forgiven if they doubt that being serious all the time is a healthy quality. Laughter is not just a need of man; it is a fact of life for any man worth saving. Indeed, it may be his only way to save himself from madness. Laughter is a part of reality, at least a part of any reality worth knowing. If the English class is a better place for bringing reality into the curriculum, humor must become a part of the total English program.

SATIRE, RESPONSE AND CREATION: A PARADIGM FOR ENGLISH CURRICULA

George Hillocks, Jr., University of Chicago

Satire has been with us for thousands of years. Scholars argue that it had its origins in the cursing and invective used by primitive peoples in rituals intended to drive off evil spirits or to rid the community of sin and guilt embodied in some luckless scapegoat. Language was believed to have a magical and terrible potency, capable of bringing about illness, defeat, and death. Men skilled in the uses of scurrility were often feared more than those skilled in the uses of military arms. In many primitive societies ridicule is so feared that it is to be avoided by any means including suicide. Anthropologists recount incidents of men killing themselves in order to avoid ridicule, while the remainder of the tribe justifies the suicide's action as being the only one available to him. There are reports that tribesmen who have been subjected to ridicule often become sick and even die, their death being attributed by the tribal group to the effects of the ridicule. Archilochus, the man whom legend holds to have invented satire in ancient Greece, was said to be so proficient in the art of hurling invective and ridicule that his words brought death. The story is that Archilochus, the son of a priest of Demeter and a slave, was betrothed to Neobule the daughter of Lycambes, a nobleman. When Lycambes refused to allow the marriage, Archilochus composed satirical verses denouncing him and his family and recited them at the feast of Demeter with awe inspiring results: Lycambes and his daughter hanged themselves. (For an interesting discussion of the psychological and anthropological origins and development of satire and of its power see Robert C. Elliott's THE POWER OF SATIRE: MAGIC, RITUAL, ART, Princeton: Princeton U Press, 1960, pp. 1-87.)

The satirist in contemporary American society does not wield such extreme powers--fortunately, perhaps, for the ancient satire of Archilochus might prove a too easy remedy for the maladies of contemporary politicians. Although few of us would be likely to hang ourselves for fear of or as the result of ridicule, we've all felt some degree of mortification in the apprehension of public ridicule. Not long ago, a nine year old boy of my acquaintance found himself subject to ridicule on two counts: he did not know the names of the players on a particular baseball team and he was the only boy invited to a little girl's birthday party. The teasing, what he regarded as ridicule, became so intense that, for several months, he avoided any contact with the older boys who were the source of invective. In the end he mustered what must have been an enormous amount of courage and confronted his assailants, with happy results I might add. Not only young children are susceptible to satiric abuse. Adolescents can be completely demoralized by a teacher who ridicules them in class. Adults have been known to respond violently to ridicule. One certain proof that satire still has powerful effects in our society is the recent revelation that the comedian who makes a business of ridiculing Nixonian speech and behavior had been placed on the White House list of enemies.

From the time of Archilochus, satirists have viewed their tasks as purgative: to rid humanity of its follies and vices through the medium of laughter. The instruments of laughter have ranged from the gentle chidings of Horace to the brutal invective Juneval. The satirist can chop his foes to pieces with the blows of a cutlass or broad sword, or he can lance an infected area with the precision of a rapier in the hands of a skilled swordsman. The cutlass or rapier like blows of the satirist are planned and delivered to provoke laughter, whether it be quiet or boisterous, gentle or savage, kindly or bitter. Ordinarily, the satirist claims to strive not simply for the punishment of folly and

evil, but for reform. Accordingly, he holds up the good, either directly or by implication, for our enlightenment. In the course of his criticism the satirist directs us to what he considers a better path.

One major type of satire is the satire of direct attack or diatribe. Because of its classical form this type of satire is sometimes referred to as formal verse satire. In this type, the target of the satirist's indignation and scorn is clearly exposed. The satirist lays it bare with a full complement of details, making it impossible for a reader or auditor to have any doubts about the target of ridicule. Any doubts about the undesireability of the target are allayed by the explicit judgment of the satirist. All this proceeds through the medium of wit and humor and, frequently, just plain abusive language.

The second major type of satire, called Menippean after Menippus who is said to have invented the form, is usually more subtle. The satire is conveyed through the interaction of the speaker's voice, the plot, the characters, and the imagery. Ordinarily, the reader must infer the targets of criticism. While these might be very obvious, as they are in the satire of MAD MAGAZINE, the targets of satire are still not explictly named and derided by the satirist. The criticisms are delivered indirectly: the gullible allow themselves to be duped by the cynical and evil characters of Ben Jonson's comedies, the satirist allows us to see the duplicity and hypocrisy of a Babbitt, and the speaker of Burns' "Holy Willie's Prayer", while seeing himself as a shining example to the congregation reveals his debauchery, pride, and vengefulness. In none of these examples is the target of satire directly named and denounced. (For discussions of the workings and types of satire see Gilbert Highet's THE ANATOMY OF SATIRE, Princeton: Princeton U Press, 1962, and Alvin B. Kernan's THE CANKERED MUSE, New Haven: Yale U Press, 1959.) In short, the contemporary student is likely to find satire all around him. And the ridicule, as long as he is not the butt of it, can have a natural appeal to him.

Fortunately or unfortunately, depending upon your point of view, not all satire is so grossly overdone and, therefore, easy to understand as is the material students gobble up in MAD MAGAZINE. When satire attains a modicum of subtlety, inexperienced readers or viewers frequently miss the point. Failure to make the appropriate inferences reduces DR. STRANGELOVE to a "science-fiction movie with a couple of weird characters in it." Many adults failed to see DR. STRANGELOVE as a satiric attack upon the mental attitudes that encouraged and permitted the development and deployment of the Bomb. Without experience in interpreting satiric irony, college students almost invariably fail to see the irony of Huck's decision to go to hell. They fail to see the perversion of the Christian society surrounding Huck which has led him to believe that it is he who does the evil thing by helping a slave. And for many, the satiric commentary of Huxley's BRAVE NEW WORLD is lost, and it becomes merely a book of science fiction prophecy. The point is that while satire is all around us, the best satire, because of its subtlety and complexity is frequently inaccessible to inexperienced readers or viewers.

In terms of our current culture, then, there is one strong pragmatic reason for teaching satire: to make the total effect of our best satire accessible to students. But there are other reasons. An ability to respond to the implied meanings of satire should enable students to respond more fully to the implications of other types of literature as well. Perhaps even more important, a carefully designed course or unit of study in satire can pull together and integrate the full spectrum of language arts activities and, thereby, provide a rich and manifold

context in which the student interprets and uses language.

Of course, it is possible to teach satire or anything else in a traditional fashion involving an assignment, a discussion, and a test. But there is no reason to teach satire in quite that fashion. In the first place, satire not only includes the conventional literary forms of drama, poetry, and fiction, but it also encompasses forms present in the popular culture: movies, television programs, graffiti, bumper stickers, posters, cartoons, and comic routines. This wide variety of material creates a second advantage. It is possible to differentiate instruction in satire for students of varying abilities. The variety of forms and different levels of difficulty engender still another advantage: a wide variety of activities. That is, the student should and can be involved as more than simply a reader of satire. The student should become not only a better reader, interpreter, and evaluator of satire, but a creator of original satires. Any approach to satire should foster growth in both cognitive and affective areas; unfortunately, such growth does not occur by magic.

If students are to respond fully to satire, the teacher must anticipate the difficulties his particular students are likely to have and plan a sequence of activities which will enable students to overcome those difficulties. Without such planning, students are likely to encounter satires which they do not understand and therefore judge to be boring, irrelevant, or foolish. There are six guidelines for planning a successful unit.

1. Begin with the students. Well before the unit begins, it will be necessary to have some analysis of the reading abilities of the students. If students have difficulty in determining the literal content of relatively easy material, there is no point in proceeding with a unit on satire, in which most of the significance is implied. If students are competent in dealing with the literal aspects of their reading, additional, more specific information is necessary. The teacher will want to know if students already know what satire is and whether or not they can interpret at least easy examples of satire. It is a rare teacher and classroom in which 100% of the students respond to class discussion. Most teachers are fortunate if even 50% of the students participate in an exploratory discussion. The result is that the information obtained will be necessarily spotty. The students who participate will reveal only part of their understanding of satire, but not all. The students who do not participate will have revealed nothing.

A much better procedure is a unit pretest. The pretest can include one question asking students to explain briefly their understanding of satire. A second question might ask students to list examples of satire with which they are familiar. In addition the test should include a range of brief satiric passages, perhaps three or four. In the first, the targets of satire should be realatively obvious. The remaining passages should increase in difficulty. For example, a pretest might begin with a simple passage which creates its effects through exaggeration (possibly a passage from Art Buchwald, Dickens' NICHOLAS NICKLEBY, or a selection from Wylie's discussion of "Momism"). The pretest might include a fable which satirizes human characteristics through the medium of animal symbols and move on to close with an ironic satire. In addition to arranging the passages from easy to difficult, the questions following each passage should also proceed from the easy to complex. Such an arrangement helps to insure that students will not give up simply because they are frustrated at first by the more difficult passages and questions.

Depending upon the teacher's initial judgment of the class's ability, the

whole test may be made very simple or very complex simply by varying the passages and the questions. In general, however, it is best to use a relatively simple pretest which will provide information about student ability to respond to a range of levels of difficulty in satire. (For a discussion of teacher made pretests and inventories relating to the reading of literature see Hillocks, McCabe, and McCampbell's THE DYNAMICS OF ENGLISH INSTRUCTION, NY: Random House, 1971, pp. 258-266, 236-253.)

2. Adjust the objectives and materials. As is true of a number of areas in English, satire can be presented at a number of levels of sophistication. Once the teacher has the results of the pretest, he can decide which level is most likely to be appropriate for the students in his classes. At any level, the unit objectives will be of two kinds, one involving responses to satire, the other involving the creation of satire. At the most basic level the main unit objective might be to identify the target of criticism in satires which use exaggeration and perhaps simple symbols, such as those occurring in fables. The students would be concerned with what is satirized and why the target is attacked. After reading and viewing examples of satire which use exaggeration, the students can write their own satires by exaggerating such things as the traffic conditions within the school, the behavior of certain groups of students, the behavior of teachers, the behavior of politicians, and so forth. They might try to write fables in which the animal characters represent human follies and vices.

At a more advanced level simple ironic satire can be introduced to the unit. In their reading, students might be concerned with identifying the targets of satire, the reasons for the criticisms, the good implied by the satire, and perhaps the devices used by the satirist. Materials such as Siegfried Sassoon's poem "Base Details", Mark Twain's "War Prayer", and Orwell's ANIMAL FARM might be used at this level. The students might write satires using not only exaggeration but irony. An interesting introduction to the creation of irony is the use of stick figure cartoons with two or more frames. In the first frame a stick figure is shown in a given situation stating some value or opinion. In the second frame the same stick figure, in a different situation, is shown acting or speaking in a way that denies his statement in the first frame.

At a more sophisticated level complex ironic satire can be introduced. Students might deal with such material as Browning's "My Last Duchess", T.S. Eliot's "The Hollow Men", Mark Twain's PUDD'NHEAD WILSON and THE MYSTERIOUS STRANGER, a novel by Kurt Vonnegut, etc. At this level the students might discriminate between the satire of direct attack and Menippean satire. They should continue to work with the kinds of skills outlined for the previous levels and perhaps begin to work with parody, identifying and explaining the operation of simple parody.

At an even more complex level the unit for very strong students might deal with the satire of particular age, the Augustan age, for instance. Such a unit, however, would presuppose the skills developed at the preceding levels or prepare students in those skills before dealing with the satire of the Augustan age. In this sort of unit the student would not only confront the difficulties of the satires themselves, but would be making and using generalizations about a literary era. Further, in order to deal with some of the finest Augustan satire the student would have to know something of classical epic and something of seventeenth century epic theory. With few exceptions, this level is not one that most high school teachers will be concerned with.

3. Remove the blocks to response. When students don't care for a particular satire, their rejection of the satire is usually not a result of some disagreement they have with the writer. They don't like the satire because its meaning is obscure to them. Such difficulties block response to particular works and further learning. To avoid such blocks, it is necessary to plan a sequence of materials and activities which move from the simple and familiar to the complex and less familiar. Thus, a unit on satire might very usefully begin with the examination of satiric cartoons, some collected by the teacher and some collected by the students. An initial discussion of cartoons car establish the basic characteristics of all satire: that it criticizes something in a humorous way. From this basic understanding it is an easy step to cartoon caricatures and the use of exaggeration. Since a satirist who uses exaggeration as a major tool is ordinarily anything but obscure, the reading and discussion of such satires can follow without difficulty.

Although the criticism of some satire is aimed at specific individuals or groups, the value and interest of most satire derivies from its general applicability. That is, H.G. Wells in his novel TONO-BUNGAY does not attack the practices of only the specific company which the narrator tells about, but all such deceitful practices and the morality underlying them. In relation to this characteristic of satire inexperienced readers frequently have two problems. First, they do not realize that a particular behavior or attitude may represent a large category of behaviors and attitudes outside the work. Second, they are unable to see the relationships between the incidents in the work and real life situations. Fables provide a simple, clear (but not simplistic) avenue to overcoming such blocks. Even the most obtuse student will recognize that the animals in fables cannot be taken literally. It is relatively clear that the animals represent human characteristics and that those human characteristics are often subjected to ridicule. A sequence of fables by such writers as Aesop, Ivan Krilof and James Thurber can be very useful in helping students to interpret the larger ramifications not only of fables but all satire. And such a sequence should lead to writing.

The sequence of instruction may then move to simple irony. Satiric irony is usually based on contrasts. When both elements of the contrast are apparent in a cartoon or in a poem or short story, the irony is relatively clear and easy to interpret. Thus, the irony of MAD MAGAZINE features is sometimes transparent. For example, in MADVERTISING by Dick DeBartolo and Bob Clarke (NY: New American Library, 1972) advertisements are satirized by showing a fake ad on one page and the product on the following page. The contrast between the promises of the ad and the reality of the product make the irony all but transparent. Such obvious material makes a good introduction to irony for many students. For most students, there's little point in beginning an exploration of satiric irony with a study of Jonathan Swift's A MODEST PROPOSAL. As already suggested, it is possible for students not only to read but create ironic satire.

Each step in the sequence should foster increasingly greater skill and experience for the reading of ensuing satires. If the sequence is carefully planned, the blocks to response will have been removed and the student will not encounter frustration. On the contrary he will not only become increasingly sophisticated as a reader and writer, but he will enjoy what he is reading and what he writes.

4. Create an environment for response. The main goal of any instructional unit in English should be to increase the student's sophistication in the use of language. In that respect, this unit is not different from others. Even though it focuses on the reading and writing of satire, it should operate to

enhance the students' total language proficiency. In order for any unit to succeed in that goal, however, it must allow, enable, and encourage students to respond as readers and writers. Response, here, does not mean abbreviated answers to occasional limited questions. It means first, that students should be interpreting, analyzing, evaluating the satiric works included in the unit and second, that students themselves should be developing and criticizing their own satric writings. Three conditions are absolutely vital to engendering meaningful and enthusiastic responses: the planned sequence discussed above, teacher willingness to avoid lecturing and encourage student response, and a meaningful variety of activities.

The goal here is not simply to recall an interpretation of a work hashed over in class, but to respond imaginatively to works independently of the teacher. Reaching that goal, however, is certainly not assured by the developmental sequence alone. The teacher must be willing to allow students the opportunity to explain what particular satires mean to them and why. The teacher must not usurp the student's opportunity to explain a work for himself. He must not view himself as an authority whose role it is to impart insight into particular works. On the contrary, his role is to enable students to derive their own understandings. The instructor is a sounding board, providing the student opportunity and encouragement to probe his own responses as both reader and writer.

A final condition essential to response is variety of activity. On most days and in most English classes around the country one instructional pattern seems to predominate: teacher lecture interspersed with teacher led discussion. Teacher lecture, defined as the giving of information to the students, is unavoidable. Every English teacher lectures, if only to say that Chaucer lived during the Middle Ages. Such statements are lecture statements. They may take up a relatively small percentage of class time; but more frequently they control the major portion of class activity. Teacher led discussion is also unavoidable. In fact, when new concepts and ideas are being introduced, it is usually highly desirable. Nevertheless, students should not remain forever reliant upon the teacher. The student-led small group discussion is an excellent activity for weaning students from teacher support. Unfortunately, many teachers fear that six groups of five students, each operating independently during a given class session will result in chaos; but chaos is not a necessary result. Students unaccustomed to such activity will need direction. The purpose of each group discussion will have to be made clear to the students, down to a set of questions concerning the problem at hand. For inexperienced students, it may be necessary to explain apparent trivialities as the best way to move furniture in preparation for small group meetings. Once students have had a few positive experiences in small group work, it is possible for a teacher to interrupt a whole class discussion with a comment such as the following: "This problem that we're having about the conflict between Snowball and Napoleon is an interesting one. Why don't you break up into your small groups and discuss it for a few minutes and try to draw some conclusions?" Without appropriate experience, however such a direction can very well result in chaos. Student led discussion has two extremely important advantages: it allows students to operate almost independently of the teacher and it allows and encourages a very high degree of student participation. In addition to the use of student led small group discussions, students can also organize debates and panels dealing with the issues that arise through their discussions of satiric works.

At least three types of dramatization are possible and desirable in a unit on satire. First, students can improvise dramatizations of non-dramatic works they read. In addition, they can improvise situations which dramatize a particular

character's faults. For example, one group of students might develop a set of incidents which display a high school principal's hypocrisy. He speaks in one way to a group of parents, but in another way to a group of students. Another group might develop or act out a situation which satirizes a human characteristic such as snobbery, pride, or greed. Improvisations might hinge upon current events of the day. Students might improvise the confessions of one of the Watergate conspirators, turning it into a kind of modern day "Pardoner's Prologue." Students working in groups might plan, write, and act burlesques of TV programs, movies and even novels. Such productions need not be very long and are good preparation for the writing of original satires. Finally, class productions of plays or parts of satiric plays contribute a great deal to the success of a unit. Two favorites with ninth graders have been the play within the play from MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM and an edited version of Moliere's THE PHYSICIAN IN SPITE OF HIMSELF. Many other plays have strong possibilities: Ionesco's RHINOCEROS and "The Leader", Bernard Shaw's ANDROCLES AND THE LION, and so forth.

All the activities discussed to this point have been group activities of one sort or another. But a major goal of the unit is independence in reading and writing satire. Students, of course, are always being asked to do independent work of one kind or another. Ordinarily, teachers who assign independent work believe that the students are singularly responsible for the quality of the results. The kind of instruction recommended here, however, places much of the responsibility for the quality of the results on the teacher. Teacher-led and group activities are primarily preparatory and supportive and should be planned with the goal of independent work in mind. The number of students who do the independent work successfully is a direct reflection on the adequacy of their preparation. If the preparatory work has been effective, most students will be successful in their independent work.

5. Prepare students for writing. Most of the unit as it has been described above will help to prepare students for writing their own satires. The unit will introduce students gradually to a variety of satiric techniques. They will have the opportunity to examine examples of each. Before trying to write a satire using a technique such as exaggeration, students may work together in groups to improvise a satiric skit which makes use of the technique. When it comes to asking students to write their own satire making use of exaggeration, the teacher will be wise to provide ample time for the discussion of possible ideas, for brainstorming, for in-class work during which time the teacher can give selected individuals special attention, and for a discussion of criteria for judging successful satires. The students should themselves develop the list of criteria.

When the writing is complete, students should be involved in criticizing and commenting upon each other's work. If groups of four or five students examine satires written by another group of students, they might wish to select the best satire from their group and have that one read aloud to the class. In addition, to comments from other students, of course, each writer should also receive comments from the teacher whose primary role it should be to praise the strongest parts of the writing and make suggestions for revisions. If possible, students should produce a mimeographed or dittoed publication of the class satires.

6. Evaluate Instruction. The evaluation of instruction should be a multifaceted activity which takes place throughout the unit. Benjamin Bloom and his colleagues have described two types of evaluation: formative evaluation which

takes place throughout the process of a learning experience and summative evaluation which takes place at the end of that process. (Bloom, Hastings and Madous' HANDBOOK ON FORMATIVE AND SUMMATIVE EVALUATION OF STUDENT LEARNING, NY: McGraw Hill, 1971.) The distinction is a useful one. Formative evaluations will take place from the very first step in the unit to the end. Some of these evaluations will be informal observations on the part of the teacher. Others will consist of evaluations of various projects completed by the students. The emphasis will be on how well the unit is working. Do the students seem to be enjoying their discussions and dramatizations of satire? Are students becoming adept in interpreting satire? Although some of these evaluations will be made informally through observation of the class, at key junctures in the unit there should be evaluation procedures which will allow the teacher to judge progress made by each individual student. These evaluations should indicate to the teacher which students need more work in a particular area, which students are ready to proceed, which aspects of the instructional process need revision, and so forth.

The summative or final evaluation activities should examine two results of the instructional process. Since the goal of this unit has been independence in reading and writing satire, the real measure of the effectiveness of instruction will be the extent to which students are able to interpret satires which they have not previously studied and the extent to which they can produce effective satires of their own. A second important effect of instruction will be student attitudes toward their work. These attitudes can be gauged by means of a questionnaire which is administered in such a way that students retain their anonymity, thereby allowing them complete freedom to express their attitudes toward both the instruction and the subject matter.

One of the popular bandwagons of the day seems to be the nearly complete denunciation of any and all methods of evaluation. The point of evaluation, however, should not be the grading or categorization of students; it should be the assessment and improvement of instruction. If we are serious about teaching anything, satire included, we should be serious about assessing the effectiveness of our instruction.

But evaluation of a well planned unit in satire should pose no threat to the teacher. A diligent search for materials appropriate to the students, a carefully planned sequence of materials and activities moving from the simple to the complex, a variety of activities planned to engender student response, and evaluations which allow the teacher to revise the materials and activities while the unit is in progress should result in an effective unit, one which is both profitable and enjoyable to the students. Although satire represents only one small phase of English studies, a well planned unit will represent an integrated cross-section of all language arts activities, a paradigm for the development of other language arts units.

WHAT'S SO FUNNY?

Barbara A. Branom, Apollo High School, Glendale, Arizona

As George Carlin and other comedians so aptly put it, one of the oldest myths is that school is a place where you are not to laugh. Nothing is considered funny in the hallowed halls (except the system itself), unless you crave the nasal tones of Sister Mary Elephant shrieking in your adolescent ear. No one desires to be like the sister, yet we all have moments of profound authoritarianism out of mere despair.

A Diversion: Have you ever contemplated casting all of your heavy philosophical, metaphysical and pedagogical discussions to the wind and teaching a unit for the sake of enjoyment? You might call it an English teacher's Spring Survival Kit--or a unit on humor. Whatever, it will earn you lots of good karma, and will lift your students out of the Valley of the Blahs.

If you feel unprofessional even toying with such a unit, may I add that it is a successful study because humor does dwell in all of us. Besides, being pessimistic for an entire semester can become an academic drag. All you need to accomplish this is: 1) a good sense of humor yourself, (this does not mean that you are going to tell them what is funny and what isn't) 2) some literature as your basis, or your supplement, and 3) a few films, or a lot of films, to illustrate. Numbers one and three belong in the vital column.

There are several directions you could pursue with this unit. The nice thing about studying humor is that it is so flexible. One approach is to separate the study into the types of humor--slapstick, irony/sarcasm, satire/parody, and the absurd. Or, if you would rather ignore the terms, you could focus upon the mediums of humor--television, comics, cartoons (especially newspaper and popular magazines), radio shows, the literature you have chosen, and of course, film. But if you are quite limited material and money-wise, you could address the study simply to the elements of humor within literature itself--fables, short stories, poetry, novels, drama, etc. In any case, whatever your decision, the humor unit should be supplemented with a few good films (this usually means recent and ones the kids will like) designed to illustrate the visual experience of humor.

Let's discuss teaching a unit focusing upon the basic types of humor within literature, only because this is the way I taught it.

My team teacher, Jean Bradley, and I designed a unit based on humor to meet the needs of "decelerated" juniors and seniors. The name of the course was Literature for the Now Generation, and the class was comprised of poor readers with some conscious emotional problems--often because they were placed continually in decelerated classes everywhere. Therefore, our primary goal was to create a non-threatening, enjoyable learning situation. I know that sounds like a phony platitude; yet, if you have ever taught "track" English, you will no doubt appreciate the task that was before us.

One way to achieve this goal is to be more of a resource guide and less of a voice of authority, especially when teaching humor. The fact is you cannot honestly "teach" humor. What might send students into hysteria may not evoke even a chuckle from you. It is grossly unfair for a teacher to impose his/her view of humor upon students when they are already the victims of the teacher's

methodology and values. This might be a time to employ some techniques of Herbert Kohl and the open classroom syndrome. One of Mr. Kohl's basic tenents is that all real learning takes place within the interest range of the student, not the teacher. An application: cater to the already established interests and then allow them to branch out. Before they know it, they have not only enjoyed themselves (yes, Virginia, learning can be fun) but have also been the participants in the learning process. After we discovered that our students were for the most part film freaks with unbelievably short reading spans, we were on our way.

A rare treat is to stand in front of thirty-five or so pseudo-sophisticates and announce that you are going to study humor. First reactions range from, "Hey did you hear the one about. . ." to unmentionables. This might be avoided by first showing a film such as THE INTERVIEW or MUNRO or THE VIOLINIST (all animated, color, satires), and then leading a worthwhile discussion or following up with a video-tape of a popular television cartoon. Then talk about the unit. They will soon lose their aloofness and distance as you begin to seriously study the nature of humor and just what is so funny.

Obviously very few films have been produced to exist as pure works of humor. The humor is usually a vehicle for another thematic purpose. But that is okay--slapstick is funny for only so long. One of the most rewarding results of a humor study is the student's ability to identify cause and effect, ironical statement, absurdity, and yes--even satire. Proceed to show the film concerning war, the environment, conformity, man's future, culture and values. After they have established the main idea, you will want to progress to supporting details. (Identifying main idea is a thinking skill.) Of course, the supporting details of the main idea will illustrate the elements of humor within the framework of the story/film/fable, etc. A lot of previewing is necessary on the part of the teacher if this is to work. Do not walk in and see the film for the first time with the class and expect to lead a successful discussion. Even though they should be doing most of the talking, you will want to point out gestures, tone, sarcasm, and other elements that added to the humorous effect possibly overlooked by their first viewing.

Allow me to share a possible introduction to your unit on humor. I would like to share the source of the following with you also, only it is unknown. All I know for sure is that all of the following is not mine. It has been used in various humor units, and is somewhat of a universal, simplified approach. You might start off with something like this:

WHAT IS A SENSE OF HUMOR?

Jokes like those about the elephants show the fun and nonsense that go along with laughter. They illustrate the delight in things ridiculous and bizarre. Yet, there are other reasons, too, for our laughter.

How many times did you laugh yesterday? What made you laugh? If you try to think about why you laughed, you probably won't know or won't remember the reasons. The chances are that you laughed at a number of different things for a variety of reasons. If you were in a good mood, probably many things seemed funny. But if you were in a bad mood, only the very unusual made you slightly smile.

Though no one has ever explained the reasons for laughter to everyone's satisfaction, everyone agrees that laughter is important to us all. A recent test showed a "sense of humor" was near the top of the list of personal qualities most admired by a group of students in suburban Chicago high schools. Another poll shows that young people think a sense of humor is a most important quality for their husband or wife to possess. You all know reasons why people think humor is important. Laughter can turn difficult situations into happy ones; it can put everyone at ease; it reflects a general sense of well being that we all admire.

While we are studying what makes us laugh you might keep the following in mind:

1) We can laugh at things which are unexpected, such as a dog walking into a class and a stranger slipping on a banana peel;
2) We can laugh at things we feel detached from, such as someone else getting a speeding ticket or someone falling in a mud puddle;
3) We can laugh at things we feel superior to, such as Archie cartoons in the newspaper or someone saying the wrong thing in class;
4) We can laugh at things which show our weaknesses in a humorous or funny way, such as Charlie Brown's dilemmas, and Alka-Seltzer commercials.

We laugh at things for various reasons and not all of them are listed above. The important thing to remember in this study is that we each have our own sense of what is funny. Jokes and situations that will send you into uncontrollable yuks will possibly float right past your fellow student, or your fellow teacher.

One final note before we begin: Abraham Lincoln is famous for his adages as well as his leadership. One of his less quoted quotes is this one: Everything funny is just a little bit ugly. Think about it!

. . .unknown and b.b.

You will probably write a much more profound introduction for your unit.

My reason for sharing the above is this: humor is an inherent part of literature. If you have been ignoring it for lack of an approach, here it is, simple as it is.

Hopefully, I have successfully justified the value of studying humor. And hopefully, you will not disregard the elective. I also used a mini-unit on humor as a unit within a unit while my Freshmen were reading THE PIGMAN. We began by viewing REPLAY, which is a type of a parody concerning the generation gap crisis. (Contemporary) The film led us into role playing, cartoons drawn by students of characters in the novel, and an eventual dramatization of the especially humorous passages in the novel. How can you honestly ignore the reality of humor while stduying a novel such as Zindel's? The possibilities of incorporating a humor study are unlimited.

Humor could be an underlying theme or a mini-unit within nearly all of the new English electives. Some possible project ideas follow this article. The films are certainly there to help us--so don't stifle yourself, Edith. Do it!

Some project or activity ideas for studying humor:

1. For vocabulary and word study, illustrate the following by means of your own drawings, a collage, or examples found in magazines: parody, pun, limerick, satire, hilarious, slapstick, farce, mock, parable, facetious, prank, slogans, ethnic, animation, sarcasm, mischievous, contempt, whimsical, trivia, corny, tease, irony, cartoon, bawdy, nonsense, caustic.

2. Write an essay or short story or poem on one of the following topics: "The Funniest Thing That Ever Happened to Me" or "The Funniest Thing I Ever Saw" or whatever.

3. Complete four limericks and then write your own original limerick, using the same form.

4. Find five jokes or cartoons in yesterday's paper and explain why you think they are funny. One paragraph per cartoon.

5. Find four examples of the four types of humor we have discussed in the introduction. Try to use different sources, such as TV, newspaper, radio, the campus.

6. Read ANIMAL FARM, CATCH-22, CATCHER IN THE RYE, any of the Zindel novels, any of the Vonnegut novels, etc., and compare the author's use of humor with a serious novel you have read. Explain the method and types of humor used.

7. Watch a comedy show on television, such as Maude, All in the Family, The Dick Van Dyke Show, M*A*S*H, The Partridge Family, The Flip Wilson Show, Laugh-In, and explain one specific part of the show that made you laugh. Why does the show appeal to the audience? Did it appeal to you?

8. Using MAD MAGAZINE, the GUINESS BOOK OF WORLD RECORDS, or RIPLEY'S BELIEVE IT OR NOT, identify and explain the author's use of humor. Is satire used in cartoons more than slapstick? Why do you think this type of humor appeals to people?

9. Write your own situation comedy or funny short story, fiction or non-fiction.

10. Organize a group to put on a humorous skit for the class. The script may be original or borrowed from our study.

MARK TWAIN, MEET BILL COSBY

Joan Clark, Bell Junior High School, Golden, Colorado

In the fall of 1970 our Language Arts department decided to offer a new semester course open to eighth and ninth grade students. It had the rather imposing title "Humor in Literature." Shortly before school began I discovered that I would be teaching the course. After a couple of inquiries as to what the material for the course was, I was handed the guide to a Scholastic Literature Unit, "The Lighter Side," designed to last about six weeks. Well, that just wouldn't do. Even if I used every bit of the material and followed the teacher's guide faithfully that still left twelve weeks; twelve weeks of what was the question.

Once the initial sense of panic left me and I became rational, I sat down to plan out strategy. Ah ha, I had it! Using "The Lighter Side" to introduce the students to the basic techniques of humor; irony, parody and satire, we would then explore the writings of some of the major American humorists such as Mark Twain, James Thurber, Robert Benchley, Dorothy Parker and maybe Will Rogers.

Fortified with a plan and a purpose I entered the classroom with confidence, only to discover that many of the students had spotted the word "humor" in the course title, ignored the "literature" part and were under the impression that they had registered for an eighteen-week joke telling marathon. I soon corrected that misconception and to make a long story short from this rather inauspicious beginning grew a successful and popular course.

Humor in Literature has now been part of our Language Arts curriculum for three years and each semester it is different both in method and material. Seventy-five per cent of the material I used that first year has been shifted, shuffled or simply chucked. That's the challenge--and the fun for the teacher, stumbling across or merely searching for something more relevant or appropriate or interesting to the students.

The original aim of the course remains the same as it was first conceived. It introduces the students to the basic elements of humor. Then they apply this newly acquired knowledge to the writings of selected American humorists with a grand finale of related individual projects.

Now that I've covered (or uncovered) the conception and purpose of Humor in Literature you might like to know, especially after all this talk about method and material, what we <u>do</u> in the class. Hang in there, I'm getting to it.

I simply start where the students are--at the point of enjoying obvious humor. Throw out the words parody, satire or irony to a classroom full of thirteen and fourteen-year-olds and you will most likely encounter a sea of glazed eyes and befuddled looks. But mention Flip Wilson, MAD MAGAZINE, or Archie Bunker and you have their undivided attention. They are familiar with the comedian and the comic, but not with the humorist and humor. I use their knowledge of the first to teach them the second.

I usually begin the course with a general discussion of humor by asking one or two students to tell about something funny that happened to them. Then I ask the class what made the incident humorous. There are varying answers, but after a short discussion they can pinpoint specific causes such as surprise, exaggeration or incongruity (although they don't use that word). Several of the students

probably didn't think the related incident was funny (oh, how they love that word!) and this will lead to a discussion of a definition of humor. Is there one true meaning they all agree with? They don't agree, of course, which makes them aware of the fact that humor is an individual matter.

After this initial dip into the generalities of humor, I use the filmstrip "The American Humorists" (The Adventures in Literature Sound Filmstrip Series-Guidance Associates) to introduce them to the humorists whose writings we will later be reading. This sound filmstrip is terrific and student response the same. Mark Twain they are familiar with, but only as the author of TOM SAWYER and HUCKLEBERRY FINN, not as a humorist. Benchley, Thurber and Parker they have never heard of. This begins a semester long goal which needs constant reinforcement--humorists write, comedians perform. It also starts them on the road from recognizing and enjoying only obvious humor to an awareness and enjoyment of subtle humor.

Although the course indicates literature, I use lots of audio-visual materials; movies, filmstrips, tapes and records, to illustrate and reinforce the techniques the humorists use in their writing. When we begin discussing satire, I show the movie ANIMAL FARM obtained from our county's media center (Contemporary Films/McGraw Hill). The students pick up the satire much quicker when it is depicted graphically and many of them want to read the book after seeing the movie. When we talk about slapstick humor, I borrow a Mack Sennett or Charlie Chaplin movie from the public library. In introducing parody, I use current parody records, usually topical in nature, to get the idea across (Cheech and Chong, no, David Frye, etc., yes). Selection in this area depends on the degree of conservatism in your particular teaching community.

Students have brought to my attention some records illustrating parody that I probably wouldn't have discovered myself; i.e., The Firesign Theatre and Tom Lehrer (I had never heard of him either, but he does some hilarious musical parodies). In fact, past and present students are one of the greatest resources of "new" material. It's not always records either. For instance, one student found a good example of satire in, would you believe, COLORADO OUTDOORS. It's entitled, "The Great American Sport of Hunting Signs" and was written by a forest ranger. Student response to the article was so favorable that I use it every semester.

Again, in the basic reinforecement of humorous techniques, we refer to comedians or comedy T.V. shows. They all know Carol Burnett's "As the Stomach Turns" spoof on soap operas. They didn't, however, know they were laughing at parody. They all watch "All in the Family" but didn't realize it was satire. Many examples like these can be used to illustrate parody and satire.

MAD MAGAZINE is an invaluable resource and certainly a popular one for pointing out irony, parody and satire. Don Martin's cartoons are generally excellent examples of irony and can be used as the first introduction to that particular humorous technique. With irony, I have them read not only humorous examples such as THE RANSOM OF RED CHIEF but one or two stories in which irony is used in a serious vein. EXAMINATION DAY by Henry Slesar or THE NECKLACE by Maupassant are two I have used with success.

After about four weeks of reading, listening and discussing basic techniques of humor we begin to deal with the American humorists one at a time. I begin with Mark Twain, not only because he's considered the greatest of our humorists, but his writings are of such a variety that they encompass almost all humorous

techniques. We always begin the exploration of each individual humorist with biographical and personality studies. I think it's important for the students not only to know the writing, but the writer. Audio-visual materials are still in evidence, but the emphasis is now more on the specific literature. There are countless movies and filmstrips on Twain that can be used to introduce him as a personality. We then read "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" and other stories and articles not so readily identified with Twain. His article "The Siamese Twins" is an excellent example of understatement and exaggeration and the students are fascinated with the background of Chang and Eng.

They also enjoy Hal Holbrook's "Mark Twain Tonight" albums, which gives them an even greater insight into Twain's humor. The constant reinforcement of the contrast and comparison between obvious and subtle humor is still needed--right to the very end. One device I use with Twain which has never failed to be successful is to play a tape of his essay "How to Tell a Story" in which he tells how he thinks a humorous story should be told. After listening to the tape, I then play selections from a Bill Cosby record and have the students discuss whether Twain would have approved of Cosby's storytelling method. (In case you're interested, every class I've had agrees that Twain would have liked Bill Cosby's humor.)

The study of James Thurber, Robert Benchley and Dorothy Parker is structured in basically the same way. Thurber is undoubtedly the most difficult of the humorists for the students to relate to simply because much of his humor is so subtle. I used a lot of trial and error in the selection of his writings. The most successful have been "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty," "The Catbird Seat," "The White Rabbit Caper," "The Night the Bed Fell," and some of his fables, particularly "The Little Girl and the Wolf" and "The Unicorn in the Garden."

Audio-visual material pertaining to Dorothy Parker is pretty scarce. I have used an album of several of her stories recorded by Shirley Booth but have gotten better response from the students simply reading the stories. There is a biography (YOU MIGHT AS WELL LIVE - Keats) which I refer students to who express a desire to know more about her. Most of the students react violently to her personal life. They don't like her, but they like her writing, particularly her poems (even the guys!). "Résumé" is always a real grabber. We read and discuss "The Waltz," "Arrangement in Black and White," "The Standard of Living," and "You Were Perfectly Fine."

I save Robert Benchley for last. His whimsical humor tends to offset the subtlety of Thurber and cynicism of Parker. For the students his humor seems the most obvious and he rates after Twain in popularity. "The Tooth, the Whole Tooth, and Nothing but the Tooth," is fun. Everybody can relate to anxiety about a trip to the dentist. "Down With Pigeons" never fails to crack me up and most of the students follow suit.

The final phase of the course consists of individual projects selected by the students from a list of twenty-five compiled by me. The twenty-fifth project is open ended and merely states that if the student doesn't like any of the preceding twenty-four, he can think up his own. I usually require that each student complete five projects in a three week period, but this varies from semester to semester, as does the list. I try to include projects of entirely different types and requiring different abilities. Some of the projects are as follows: writing parodies of songs, poems, stories, historical documents, etc.; writing an original humorous short story or poem; creating an original

cartoon strip; writing and producing a humorous skit; creating a photographic essay of "humor" at school or home; surveying students and staff as to their favorite comedian and analyzing and graphing the results. The first year I used the latter project I was almost lynched by my fellow colleagues. I didn't realize until it was too late that 75% of the students chose this as one of their projects. How would you like to be asked your name, age, sex, and favorite comedian forty seven times in three days? I now limit that project to the first two students in each section who reach me first without injury to themselves or others.

The quality of many of these projects is outstanding. Students never fail to amaze me with their wit and imagination. This final phase is also resource material for the course. I revise my list and also use student produced materials as examples for the next semester.

To my knowledge, there are very few junior high schools that offer this kind of course. Why? Perhaps teachers feel it's not relevant, or the material would be too difficult. Maybe the teacher is simply bound by a dictated curriculum. I don't have a pat answer. But I do know one thing; we tried it and they like it!

LAUGH IT OFF

Robert A. Larabell, Arcadia High School, Scottsdale

How do you get the hard-core nonreader hooked on books? Well, in "Paperback Power" we tickle them into submission.

(Those readers who are acquainted with the background and procedures of "Paperback Power" may want to skip this paragraph, while we explain that it is not our answer to the energy crisis.) "Paperback Power" is a guided free-reading course in which the students are invited to lose themselves in reading enjoyment. There are no tests, reports, quotas, patterns, required reading, or any other standard pedagogic stipulations; the kids simply find something among our three thousand paperback books which meets their interest and reading levels, and they read away, setting their own pace, pattern, and pleasure. We chat with the kids individually as they complete books to determine the patterns of their reading reactions, likes, and dislikes, and then we recommend to them other books which would seem to best fit these individual reading personalities. Grading is accomplished by a scale of "productive classroom reading hours," which is simply the mechanical measurement of the students' attendance and adherence to our "bell-to-bell reading" agreement. We draw over 80% of Arcadia's juniors and seniors into this elective English course, and the average number of book completions per student in this one semester course runs close to fifteen. Nearly seven hundred titles are stocked, ranging from BLACK BEAUTY to BOYS AND GIRLS TOGETHER, from Dickens to Updike, from the Doc Savage series to the Snopes trilogy. The students have reading backgrounds ranging from absolute zero to three-page lists, and they complete anywhere from four to forty books during their, roughly, eighty hours of reading time in "Paperback Power."

Now that nearly eight hundred students have completed and relished "Paperback Power" in the four semesters it has been offered at Arcadia High School, we find that new batches of incoming students enter the class with pretty firm ideas of what they want to read. Some even bring lists developed from previous students' recommendations. So getting started is really no great problem with most of the kids; as a matter of fact, they just can't wait to get started, and they have to exhibit patience while we spend the first day explaining the course and procedures to them. But let's talk about the three, four, or half a dozen kids in each class whose reading background is zilch, who have not brought any preconceived ideas into class as to what they would like to read, and who may even be a bit skeptical, or at least suspicious, about the possibility of their learning to like reading after ten or twelve years of turn-off.

While we vigorously resist the temptation to stereotype kids into half a dozen set reading lists, while we have become firmly convinced that each student has a uniquely individual reading personality, it is necessary to make some quick evaluations early in the "Paperback Power" course, lest the student stumble into two or three immediate "losers" (books which fail to hold the student's interest long enough for him to want to finish them) at this critical starting point. It is fairly safe, for example, to steer the sweet little innocent-looking chicklettes into Jeannette Eyerly books, or MR. & MRS. BO JO JONES, or JOY IN THE MORNING, or YOU WOULD IF YOU LOVED ME, or LISA, BRIGHT AND DARK. The more "far-out" looking gals, on the other hand, probably will prefer something a little faster, like LAST SUMMER, or MY DARLING, MY HAMBURGER, or 79 PARK AVENUE, or even (if they haven't already read it) THE HARRAD EXPERIMENT. The more sedate-appearing guys with little reading background are easily hooked early with such titles as THE PIGMAN, THE MAGICIAN, SOUNDER, and A STONE FOR DANNY FISHER, while the more

robust males probably will prefer starting with GO ASK ALICE, THE GRADUATE, DELIVERANCE (although it is a bit difficult reading), and of course, SUMMER OF '42. For the sensitive, mystic, moody, and introspective dreamers of either gender, there is the route of Gibran, Hesse, THE LITTLE PRINCE, JONATHAN LIVINGSTON SEAGULL, and even THE DRIFTERS. By the same token, it is easy to develop a list for those with expressed interest in religious themes, science fiction, sports, mystery and intrigue, westerns, or even the drug scene. But what do you do with that sullen-looking, highly mature (physically, at least), cynical guy who signed up for "Paperback Power" not so much because he actually believed that he could learn to like reading, but because it was the only course on campus that didn't appear to play those classroom games which almost invariably stamp him as a loser, if not through his flunking, then at least through his failing to gain anything which he considers important?

This is the type of guy we like to tickle into submission (but we don't mean submission to class rules and procedures; we mean submission to the fact that reading is one of the very few pleasures in life that is uniquely geared to its individual participants). This is the type of guy we steer towards the "Humor and Satire" rack in our paperback library. Once he gets started there, he soon discovers that he isn't alone in having concluded that the world is pretty goofed up, but that the one sure way to keep the screwed-up society from getting you down is to laugh it off. He may not know how to define or even spell the words, but "absurdity" and "satire" soon become not only this kid's key to reading pleasure, but also his answer to the pressures which might otherwise drive him into open rebelliousness, possible violence, or worse yet, total defeat. A glance at some of the titles in this humor section of our paperback library will give the reader some clues as to the effectiveness of their usage as hookers for this type of hard-core nonreader.

M*A*S*H is our most popular book in the humor section, and it is the easiest to use as an ice breaker because many of the students have seen the movie and most of them have viewed the television version. The book is far from elementary reading level, and the humor in it is often quite subtle, but these so-called "nonreaders" seem to have no trouble with it at all. They dig the fact that at least five of our more sacrosanct institutions are being spoofed: war, the military, medical science, religion, and sex. Actually, the novel is considerably less "gross" and graphic than was the movie, and the humor in it depends much more on subtleties and innuendo than does the slapstick television version. In short, it is an adult book, precisely geared to lead the reader to the conclusion that, while we aren't about to quickly change all of those hypocritical elements of our societal structure that bug us, we certainly are entitled to reduce them to the satirical abuse they seem to deserve.

Close on the heels of M*A*S*H in popularity is FLAP (originally entitled, NEVER TRUST A DRUNKEN INDIAN). Here, again, the language is a bit coarse, the events are definitely adult, and the subject matter is the satirical slaughter of one of our societal sacred cows, the Indian issue. Written prior to BURY MY HEART AT WOUNDED KNEE and CUSTER DIED FOR YOUR SINS, this hilarious treatment of the Indian unrest gets its positive message across every bit as effectively as do the aforementioned historical and manifesto approaches. Additional local appeal is achieved by the fact that Chief Flapping Eagle's tribe is located just outside contemporary Phoenix, and one of their adventures includes the attempt to capture our home town. The humor in FLAP is less subtle, more raucous and situational, than that in M*A*S*H, with the consequence that our hard-core "nonreaders" often find themselves suddenly and uncontrollably erupting in open laughter in class while reading FLAP.

The first semester that we offered "Paperback Power" one of our students brought in a book that is, apparently, a sleeper elsewhere, but a proven and consistent winner in our classes. BIG PHIL'S KID is the story of a sixteen-year-old boy who suddenly discovers that his dad is a Mafia boss. The kid is not at all certain that he likes this role, but he can't seem to escape papa's protection; even, for example, when he travels out of state to go to college, he discovers that the car his dad has given is virtually armored, and the first time he gets into a scrap on campus, his adversaries are suddenly intimidated by his father's henchmen. It is the boy's first person dry wit, reminiscent often of Holden Caufield, which captures the reader. As opposed to M*A*S*H and FLAP, the humor in this book is witty and caustic, rather than coarse, and is slyly satirical; the open laughter it provokes is more apt to be giggles and snickers, rather than guffaws.

Paul Zindel's three short novels are replete in adolescent humor. The dual narrators of THE PIGMAN employ a humorous style more readily identifiable with younger high school students, and some of the more mature students often label it as "silly but funny." In MY DARLING, MY HAMBURGER, the characters are a little older and the humor a bit more sophisticated. It is in his third novel, I NEVER LOVED YOUR MIND, that Zindel appeals to the hard-core older students in our "Paperback Power" classes. Dewey Daniels, the seventeen-year-old high school dropout who narrates this novel, is a self-styled cynic whose artificiality of style (including ridiculous footnotes) quickly brands his naivety and his susceptibility to the vegetarian, free-wheeling, dope-devotee, free-love, antics of the girl who captures his heart but leaves him because, "I never loved your mind!" We usually hold Zindel's books until the typical "nonreader" has the hook fairly well into him; they are fantastic for continuing the hooking process, but not quite raucous and substantial enough for the initial hooking.

Another almost sure-fire winner is SUMMER OF '42, particularly if the student has not already seen the movie. While our typical "nonreaders" are apt to scoff at the immaturity of the three boys in this novel, more often than not they'll concede that they "used to be that way," too, and they find much to amuse them in the kids' frantic and frenzied scurry towards sexual initiation. Reactions to the profanity in this book's dialogue underline one of the hypocrisies of our society: while many adult readers are shocked and troubled to see this type of language in print, most of them grudgingly agree that it is an accurate transcription of the language we used at that age; on the other hand, our contemporary students are not the least bit shocked or troubled by this language and consider it to be merely an immature stage of communication that most adolescents outgrow. The positive comparisons that our students make between the "animal love" experience of Oscy, as contrasted with the "beautiful love" experience of Hermy, marks this novel as thematically significant as well as highly amusing.

Vonnegut's books get a good play in our "Paperback Power" classes, but they definitely appeal more to the mature and perspective reader who can distinguish the depth of absurdities being satirized. There appears to be no middle ground with students who attempt Vonnegut's novels; either they give up in confusion before completing the first book, or they become so thoroughly hooked on Vonnegut that they insist on reading all seven of the titles in our racks. The best process of getting a student hooked on Vonnegut seems to be to start him out with the less complicated GOD BLESS YOU, MR. ROSEWATER, suggest that he then tackle the more disjointed but fairly easy to follow CAT'S CRADLE, let him toy with SIRENS OF TITAN for the science fiction background, and then turn him loose on SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE for climactic impact. Vonnegut's earlier books, MOTHER NIGHT and PLAYER PIANO PIANO, are probably best saved as after-dinner drinks. Selected stories in

WELCOME TO THE MONKEY HOUSE can be read as fill-in at any time during the Vonnegut program. Once the former "nonreader" reaches the stage of really appreciating Vonnegut's humor, he may be safely considered to be as mature a reader as any in the class.

Once the hook is well imbedded, we no longer have a "nonreader," and his reading interests usually drift into many of the various other categories in our library. For those who wish to further exploit their love for humor and satire, we offer several other truly significant novels. CATCH 22, of course, remains monumental in the ranks of books expounding the absurdity theme, but we steer students away from it who seem to be strictly plot-oriented; it takes a satire lover to fully recognize and appreciate the absurdity of sanity in this great novel. By the same token, ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST does a masterful job of portraying actual conditions in a mental institution by mixing in enough ribal humor to offset the grim horror of the situation. Naturally, we stock CATCHER IN THE RYE, and it still gets a reasonably good play among our students, despite the fact that Holden's antics have become a bit tame by today's standards. Wibberly's THE MOUSE --- series captures some of our readers, as do Art Buchwald's collection of satirical essays in THE ESTABLISHMENT IS ALIVE AND WELL IN WASHINGTON, and Breslin's spoof of the Mafia, THE GANG THAT COULDN'T SHOOT STRAIGHT. Other popular books reflecting the satirical wit which adolescents like to feel they possess are RED SKY AT MORNING and THE PENNY WARS.

What we're suggesting, then, is that, instead of spinning wheels attempting to woo the "hard-core nonreader with adventure, sports, or even spicy stories, it has proven more effective to tickle him into submission with a wide selection of books which dare him not to enjoy them and, in fact, defy him to maintain his straight, sour, face while reading them. After all, a la the philosophy of the absurdists, we might as well recognize that life is a series of pratfalls which leave us with but three clear alternatives: we can curse the gods who keep pulling the rug out from under us, we can remain on our prats and die inwardly of embarrassment and frustration, or we can pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and join in the laughter of the spectators at the absurdity of the situation. Laughter may be for fools, but Shakespeare wasn't the only one who concluded that the fools are wise, and the wise, fools.

IN SEARCH OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY DEVIATE: SOME PROBLEMS IN TEACHING SATIRE

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Satire, by intent, aims to correct humanity by causing man to laugh at himself and other, laugh at the numerous follies, pretensions, and absurdities he afflicts upo n himself and others, laugh at the numerous follies, pretensions, and absurdities he afflicts upon himself and others. In short, satire forces man to examine his values and conduct--an activity which is particularly timely in our age of pompous specialization and extreme affectation. This alone is reason enough to introduce students to the wit and value of satire.

Unfortunately, however, all too often we as English teachers attempt such in introduction by turning to the eighteenth century for our materials, recalling from our college survey courses the names of Dryden, Gay, Mandeville, Pope, and Swift. It is not my intention here to demean these deservedly famous British satirists. However, it is my contention that works by these writers are inappropriate to use while attempting to introduce the students to the satiric mode. These writings are inappropriate for three reasons, the first two growing out of the specific character of satire and the third out of the unique character of Eighteenth Century literature.

The first is that satire demands a fixed standard of conduct, an "ideal" against which the actual performance of humans can be measured. This standard must be known and understood by the audience if the satire is to be effective, if the audience is to recognize the social deviate satirized in the work. The Eighteenth Century audience had such an ideal--an established belief in the "rational man" who was innately good (Alas! Society corrupts!) and who had a fixed role in the smooth functioning, "clock-like" universe.

Unfortunately, this "ideal appears today as, euphemistically, naive. World War II severely challenged the belief in man's innate goodness, replacing the belief in the "rational man" with a lurking suspicion that man is "irrational." Existential philosophy describes the universe not as a clock but as absurd, and daily reports of man's ability to destroy his environment suggest that if man indeed has a role in the universe it is that of an ecological Attila The Hun.

For all practical purposes, the philosophy of the eighteenth century is as distantly alien to the contemporary adolescent as are the religious rites of the ancient and mysterious Sumerians. The chances are excellent that the contemporary student will have no idea of the "ideal" against which eighteenth century writers mockingly measured the actual performances of his contemporaries. How then can we suppose that Eighteenth Century satire will introduce the student to satire and foster an appreciation for the mode? How can the contemporary student be expected to recognize an eighteenth century social deviate?

The second characteristic of satire is that it is extremely topical dealing with, for the most part, the affections, attitudes, and conventions of a particular age or of a specific social circle. This characteristic makes satiric writings from any past age difficult for the modern reader, but the eighteenth century was particularly unique. (It must be admitted that Swift's GULLIVER'S TRAVELS, when read in entirity, satirizes human nature; however, students rarely get the entire work, reading instead only the voyage to Lilliput or the voyage to Brobdingnag which are very topical as they criticize eighteenth century governments.) Dryden's "Mac Flecknoe" or Swift's "Battle of the Books" should demonstrate the topical nature of Eighteenth Century satire, but, perhaps, the best example is Pope's "Rape of the Lock'--the mock epic written to satirize the moral outrage of society to Lord Peter's outrageous and immoral act, the snipping of a lock of hair from Miss Arabella Fermor's saintly head.

How can the contemporary adolescent respond to this satiric attack upon this eighteenth century "moral outrage," when he can neither understand nor believe the outrage actually occurred? Imagine a contemporary Miss Fermor's reaction to some dude snipping a lock of her hair; she would no doubt be hacked that her coiffeur got screwed up, but she would hardly feel that her virtue had been violated. To the contemporary adolescent, the incident and the "outrage" are too stupid to consider writing about, much less reading several thousand heroic couplets about.

The third reason that Eighteenth Century satire is inappropriate for introducing students to the nature of the satiric mode is not related to satire in general but to the particular character of Eighteenth Century literature. There is no need to list all of the literary conventions used by the writers of the age, but a few examples will serve to demonstrate the problem. Again, Pope's "Rape of the Lock" will serve. What is the contemporary adolescent to do with the game of "ombre" which Pope described to the delight of his audience in the manner of an epic battle? Or, Pope's burlesque of the traditional descent into Hades? Or, how is the contemporary adolescent going to react to the "Sylphs" hovering around while Belinda, the fictional Miss Fermor, is at her toilet? Obviously, a sophisticated understanding of literary history is required before the contemporary reader can hope to understand the "Rape of the Lock," let alone be amused by the satire.

This discussion has not been developed to suggest that Eighteenth Century satire has no place in literature study in the high school. The point is that due to the character of satire in general and to the character of Eighteenth Century satire in particular, the works of Dryden, Gay, Mandeville, Pope and Swift, works sandwiched in between MACBETH and "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," are not appropriate materials for introducing students to the nature of satire. To be enjoyed and understood, Eighteenth Century satire requires an extensive amount of preparation aimed at acquainting the students with the character of the age and its literature, leaving little or no time to prepare the students for learning to read and appreciate satire in general.

Preparing a unit designed to introduce the students to the nature of satire demands, as does nay other preparation, that careful consideration be given to the selection of materials. The following paragraphs examine four suggested guidelines for selecting materials for an introductory unit on satire.

The first guideline is that the selected materials should be works which measure actual human performance against an "ideal," "standard" or "reality" with which the students are familiar. This guideline attempts to insure that the students, equipped with a knowledge of the standard, will be able to recognize the deviate behavior satirized in the work. An added advantage to the use of this guideline is that the student by being able to describe the standard will be able to understand more readily that the existence of such a standard is integral to the success of satire, thereby acquiring an insight into the nature of satire.

The second guideline is that the selected materials should satirize affectations, zttitudes, or situations which the students can recognize as behaviors which might possibly take place. Again, this guideline attempts to insure that the students are capable of enjoying the satire because it deals with a reality which they know exists. The "willing suspension of disbelief" is alien to the intent of satire. The use of materials selected according to this guideline also helps to insure that the students will become aware of the topical nature of satire.

The third guideline is that the selected materials should not manifest unfamiliar literary techniques which might obscure the satire, perhaps hiding it under an impenetrable blanket of literary allusions and conceits with which the students are not familiar. The selected materials should not force the students to run a literary obstacle course before they can develop an understanding into the nature of satire.

The fourth guideline is that the selected materials should be funny to the students. The problem with locating materials which will amuse the students is central to introducing them to the nature of satire as satire attempts to improve humanity through laughter, but it is also a difficult problem. The problem is twofold. One aspect of the problem is found in the nature of humor. Society, ethnic groups, peer groups, etc. define what is funny and what isn't. For example, "Sick Jokes" were funny to adolescents during the 1950's but were not funny to their parents. Similarly, Joseph Heller's CATCH 22 is not funny to many adults who lived a military existence during W.W. II, but the book is extremely funny on many college campuses.

Another aspect of this problem is the matter of adolescent sensitivity. For example, a satiric work dealing with the bumbling attempts of a sixteen-year-old, would-be Cassanova might be funny to an older reader but might only embarrass a sixteen-year-old.

Unfortunately, there are no guidelines for determining what will be funny to a particular group of students and what will not be. Each teacher must draw the necessary information from personal knowledge of the character and sophistication of the students in the class.

These four guidelines suggest that the most suitable materials for introducing students to the nature of satire are modern and contemporary selections, and there is an abundance of such materials. For example, take sex education. There are at least two contemporary novels known to be popular with adolescents which, in places, satirize sex education: Richard Bradford's RED SKY AT MORNING and Paul Zindel's MY DARLING, MY HAMBURGER. The frequently inane depiction of reality by movies and TV are satirized in John Steinbeck's "How to Tell the Good Guy from the Bad Guys," recently reprinted in COPING WITH THE MASS MEDIA, and the "Cyclops" weekly reviews in NEWSWEEK frequently are tightly constructed satires. The political scene is constantly satires. The political scene is constantly under attack by Art Buchwald in his nationally syndicated newspaper column. Such magazines as MAD and THE NATIONAL LAMPOON take on the entire Western Civilization with their satiric attacks. Many national syndicated comic strips such as "Doonesbury" can be used.

Central to the development of the suggested guidelines, possible topics, and sources for such material is the idea that an introductory unit should make it as easy as possible for the students to read and to respond positively to the representative selections. This concern is basic to the conviction that an introductory unit should provide the opportunity for the students to discover for themselves the basic characteristics of the topic being considered, in this case such basic characteristics of satire and its purpose, how it works, and types of materials dealt with.

In order for such discoveries to be made, the students must read and respond to the materials, and the teacher must work to direct the student responses. In directing the responses, the teacher must ask questions which will lead to the desired discoveries. For example, by asking the students to figure out why they found a selection to be funny, the teacher is asking the students to realize that the behaviors satirized deviate from the accepted standards of conduct. Such a conclusion leads naturally to attempting to understand why the

satire was written, leading eventually to an understanding of the purpose behind satiric writing. If the students should not find a selection funny (It's bound to happen.), the teacher can ask questions which attempt to have the students investigate why they did not find the material funny; such questions can lead to the realization that the students did not know the standard against which the satirized behavior was measured or that the satire dealt with a topic with which the students were not familiar. Either conclusion can lead to an understanding of the nature of satire.

Admittedly, the discovery method is difficult to use because, and in addition to the teacher's mental anguish and fatigue, of the large amount of time needed. Directing student responses is time consuming, especially before the students begin to see the pattern into which their thinking is being directed. A good deal of time is needed also because a considerable number of representative selections must be read before the students can begin to isolate general characteristics of satire by relating the conclusions from the specific selections.

Much of the mental anguish and the huge demands on time can be eliminated if the introductory unit is constructed so that much of the early work is done with cartoons from local newspapers or from the NATIONAL LAMPOON or MAD. Cartoons are characteristically brief and to the point. In consequence, many selections can be used and patterns of response developed in a minimum amount of time.

Then, once the students have begun to see the pattern of their work, the conclusions found can be measured against more extended satiric works. The work with extended satires can be done in groups; and the materials read can be arranged by topics such as sex education or movies or advertising, or the materials can be arranged by form, novels, essays, or even records such as Arlo Guthrie's "Alices Restaurant" or the Bob Newhart albums. The conclusions reached by the groups can be compared and synthesized.

Then after the students have developed a basic understanding of the nature of satire, it might be time to consider the writings of the great Eighteenth Century British satirists, perhaps even exploring the distinctions between the dark, bitter Juvenalian satire and the lighter, funnier Horatian satire which, throughout this discussion has been considered as the most suitable type for use in an introductory unit.

The following is a severely limited number of sources from which suitable materials for an introductory unit on satire might be found. The sources are not listed by age-group or any other determining factor which might influence selection. Furthermore, no attempt is made to suggest that, say, all of the essays in a particular collection of essays are satiric. The purpose of this bibliography is to suggest that there is a vast amount of readily available materials from which selections can be taken for use in an introductory unit on satire.

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HUMOR IN LITERATURE: HOW DO STUDENTS RESPOND?

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Humor is a facet of day-to-day existence for nearly every person. It operates as a means of release from tension, as relief from boredom, and as a force to bring people closer as they join in laughter at a situation that represents a universal problem or at a character with the human failings we all share. Laughter is a response to many stimuli. It commonly occurs in group audience situations, yet it is an intensely personal reaction. Although response to humor comes through everyday experiences, it also comes from experiences with books. Enjoyable episodes in books are often memorable and, perhaps because of that, humor has emerged as an important factor in determining reading interests.

Much of what is known about young people's responses to humor has been based on response to jokes and to pictures, rather than on response to literature. Nevertheless, theoretical analyses of humor and studies of reactions to various forms of humor are interesting background for teachers and others who want to know more about the responses people are likely to make when they meet humor in literature. Such information can be useful in reading guidance. It is also possible that knowledge about laughter and the events that trigger it can be of use in helping young people to understand some of their reactions to situations in print.

Theoretical discussions by philosophers and psychologists give information about the nature of humor. One of the most scholarly classifications of humor stimuli was made by Stephen Leacock. His analysis of humor includes humor derived from words, ideas, situations, and characters. The humor attributed to characters may arise from sympathetic appreciation of a predicament or it may be based upon the misfortunes of others. The personal sensitivities of the reader influence his reaction to character humor. Humor has been designated as an avenue of release from tension or as a vicarious way of showing dislike for enemies, as the laughter of one character at the expense of another. Leacock states that "humor had its origin in exultation - the sense of personal triumph over one's adversary or sense of delight at seeing something demolished or knocked out of shape." (HUMOUR AND HUMANITY, London: Thornton Butterworth Ltd., 1937, p. 24) From that statement it would seem that humor is indeed related to characters and to the interplay between them.

Humor in words has been investigated and analyzed by a number of people. Leacock categorized the most salient types of humor found in words. His classification includes repetition of words and alliteration, bad spelling and typographical errors, misuse of big words, faulty sentence structure, proper names altered to amusingly similar words, and satirical presentation. (HUMOUR AND HUMMANITY, pp. 48-53) Freud considered adult humor to be mostly play on words, puns, and absurdities. Certainly the appreciation of puns relies upon size of vocabulary and the ability to make rather abstract interpretations. It is possible that clever puns are too abstruse in meaning to be considered humorous by most children.

Leacock has described humor found in situations as "discomfiture, horseplay, incongruity, and confusion." (HUMOUR AND HUMANITY, p. 94) Sidis, in an analysis of humor, points out the laughter directed at a person or at an action that is ridiculed. He suggests also the frequent humor arising from surprise at the unexpected and deviations from the customary. (Boris Sidis, PSYCHOLOGY OF LAUGHTER, NY: Appleton, 1913, p. 27) These elements of humor appear in books

for people of all ages. Laughter as a form of ridicule is at once sophisticated and childish, perhaps serving as an outlet for inner feelings of insecurity.

Analysis of humor suggests that there are broad facets of humor common to all ages. The humor arising from confusion and humor based on word play and double meanings appeals to people of all ages. Children are amused by the humor produced by ridicule of a character. According to Lazar, they also enjoy books with a "humor-mischief" element because the children are always getting into trouble and enjoy seeing story characters in the same role. (May Lazar, READING INTERESTS, ACTIVITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR BRIGHT, AVERAGE, AND DULL CHILDREN, NY: Teachers College, Columbia U, 1937, p. 87) Humor arising from a surprising incident and humor triggered by exaggeration and impossible events are also enjoyed immensely.

It is evident that there are a number of distinct types of humor represented in literature, and it seems likely that responses to those forms of humor are influenced by characteristics of the reader as well as by those of the stimulus. From that standpoint it is interesting to look at relationships between psychological and social characteristics of readers and their responses to humor.

In 1962 Cunningham used female high school freshman as subjects for a study of the relationship between sense of humor and intelligence. (Anne Cunningham, "Relation of Sense of Humor to Intelligence," THE JOURNAL OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY, 1962, pp143-147) She administered the Thurstone Test of Mental Alertness and a measure of humor, the Raley Cartoon Test. The cartoon test, comprised of forty sets of four cartoons, asks subjects to rank each set in order of humor appeal. Results indicated that, on the basis of tests used in the study, humor is not related to intelligence. The author suggested that, since cartoons in the tests had originally been selected by adolescents similar to the subjects used in the experiment, there may have been no intellectual challange for the group tested. She felt that the test would perhaps be more effectively used with younger children.

The relationship between response to humor and certain personality traits of an individual was investigated by Landis and Ross. (Carney Landis and John W. H. Ross, "Humor and Its Relation to Other Personality Traits," THE JOURNAL OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY, 1933, pp. 156-175) As a first step in constructing the testing instrument, they identified seven types of humor. The categories were: 1) humor of quantity (obvious exaggeration); 2) humor of incongruity (association of incompatibles); 3) humor of the unexpected; 4) humor of truth (projection of self into the situation which exposes unrevealed thoughts); 5) humor of superiority: 6) release of repression (sex, fear, etc.); and 7) the ridiculous (nonsensical use of logic, verse, etc.). Three readers selected thirty jokes from joke books, humorous publications, magazines and similar publications. Jokes used were those which the readers agreed were illustrative of only one category of humor.

Landis and Ross asked three groups of subjects to rate each joke for quality, using a scale of A through E, and then to classify the joke according to the type of humor represented, using the categories described above. Subjects were also tested on a introversion-extroversion scale and with an intelligence test. The three groups of subjects were college males, college females, and a group of delinquent girls. Results indicated that individuals of a higher intelligence tended to place a higher value on incongruity jokes. Introverts tended to place jokes in the Repression category and to value them highly. Extroverts tended to place jokes in the Truth category and to value them highly.

Eysenck, a British psychologist, was interested in three problems concerned with appreciation of humor. (H.J.Eysenck, "The Appreciation of Humour: An Experimental and Theoretical Study," BRITISH JOURNAL OF PSYCHOLOGY, 1942, pp. 295-308.) They were: 1) the agreement of subjects with regard to the appreciation of humor; 2) the different types, or elements, of humor involved in responses to humor; and 3) the influence of personality factors upon reaction to humorous stimuli. He used as subjects sixteen people ranging in age from seventeen to thirty-five. Eight were university students and eight were not engaged in academic activities. Sex distribution was equal.

Eysenck's subjects took three humor tests which asked them to rank grouped items in order of funniness. The tests covered humor dealing with verbal jokes, humorous drawings, and humor to be found in looking at two photographs, such as photographs of a person and a toad, which have some points of similarity but are very different in other respects. Test items were chosen so as to get equal proportions of good, average, and bad jokes and representative samples of the seven types of humor identified by Landis and Ross which, in turn, were based on a theoretical analysis of humor done by Eastman.

Eysenck looked at test results in terms of these bases: 1) appreciation for sexual as opposed to non-sexual jokes, 2) appreciation for complex as opposed to simple jokes, and 3) a greater liking for personal as opposed to impersonal jokes. He found that on the picture test there was a distinction between subjects who prefer jokes based mainly on the character of the persons depicted and those who prefer jokes based on the humor of the situation (personal-impersonal contrast). When he assessed the subjects' temperamental traits, he found factors which differentiated between the aggressive, masculine type of person and the emotionally dependent type and between the sociable and unsociable types. The sex factor in jokes correlated .48 with the aggressive, sociable kind of temperament. Complexity of the joke correlated .61 with social shyness, extroverts tending to prefer simple jokes.

Laing studied the differences in sense of humor of subjects in three age ranges, using a total sample of 709 subjects. (Alexander Laing, "The Sense of Humor in Childhood and Adolescense," BRITISH JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY, 1939, p. 201.) The ages were seven to ten, eleven to thirteen, and fourteen to eighteen. The children and young adults were asked to talk or write on these topics: 1)Amusing things I see about me, 2) The most amusing experience I ever had, 3) Comical people I have seen, and 4) Comical people I have read about. Older subjects were also given the topics "My sense of humor," and "What makes me laugh." The youngest group found deviations from the normal or conventional to be most humorous. The middle group enjoyed most frequently the discomfiture of someone. The adolescents showed more marked differences in their appreciation of humor, having greater appreciation of verbal wit and a tendency toward reflection on why they had laughed.

A study done by Malchow is more closely related to humor in literature than are many of the humor studies. (Evangeline Malchow, "Reading Interests of Junior High School Pupils," THE SCHOOL REVIEW, March 1937, pp. 175-185.) Junior high school pupils were questioned in order to learn their reasons for enjoying books. A list of ninety book titles was compiled from other studies of reading interests and given to 1,387 young people. They were asked to answer these questions about each book they liked: 1) Why do you like the book? 2) Which character do you like best? What do you like about him or her? and 3) Which part interests you the most? Boys mentioned interest in animals, adventures, stories of boys and girls who find themselves in mischief and trouble and in humorous predicaments

and pranks. Girls also mentioned interest in stories of boys and girls who find themselves in mischief and trouble and in humorous predicaments and pranks. Humor was mentioned by boys of all ages included in the study and appreciation of humor was most frequently mentioned by pupils with intelligence scores of 110 or higher. Humor had more definite appeal to girls of high intelligence than to boys of similar ability and humor showed an increase in popularity in grade nine.

The study most specifically concerned with responses of adolescents to humorous literature was done by Wells. (Ruth Wells, "A study of Tastes in Humorous Literature among Pupils of Junior and Senior High Schools," JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH, October 1934, pp. 81-91.) The author constructed an objective test made up of samples of different types of humorous literature. For the purpose of the study, types of humorous literature were classified as: 1)Slapstick or physically boisterous humor; 2) Absurdity, including incongruous situations and surprise; 3) Satire, defined as ridicule by exaggeration or over-emphasis; and 4) Whimsy, defined as the presentation of truth often ludicrous or incongruous in an imaginative or fantastic way. Samples selected were submitted to four authorities in literature and education who judged them as belonging to one of the categories of humor described above or as "not humorous" or of mixed types of humor. Those selections with 75 percent agreement as to type of humor were used in the study.

The selections were arranged in ten groups, with one of each type in a group. The 400 pupils from grades seven, nine, eleven and twelve were asked to scale the selections in each group on the basis of best to least liked. Of the 400 adolescents tested, less than 6.5 percent failed to show definite preference for a type or minimum appeal for a type. In all grades, absurdity was the favorite characteristic, slapstick was rated second, satire third, and whimsy fourth. There were some differences among socioeconomic levels, with higher socioeconomic children showing greater appreciation for satire and whimsy and less for slapstick and absurdity. There were smaller differences in grade seven responses than in the higher grades. There were also significant differences between boys and girls with girls liking slapstick and absurdity less and satire and whimsy more.

Results of several studies done with elementary age children suggest that the manner of presenting material and the means of obtaining responses may influence response to humor. In a pilot study, Monson introduced fifth grade children to books taken from a list of recommended humorous children's books. (Dianne Lynn Monson, A STUDY OF INTELLIGENCE AND SEX AS FACTORS INFLUENCING CHILDREN'S APPRECIATION OF HUMOR IN LITERATURE, Unpublished Master's Paper, U of Minnesota, 1962) They were asked to read each book and to rate specific elements of humor found in the book. A rating scale was constructed for evaluation of twenty basic elements of humor, based on a weighting of 1 through 5. The results showed that children in the high IQ group showed stronger positive reactions to humor than did children in the low IQ group and the tendency was more marked in boys' responses than in those of the girls. The low IQ group showed a tendency to favor humor associated with characters. The high IQ subjects gave a greater percentage of high ratings to the humor of situations. High IQ boys particularly liked humor in which a foolish or conceited character was ridiculed. Low IQ children more often favored the humor of funny looking characters or characters made fun of because they were stupid.

A second study by Monson looked at the responses of 635 fifth graders to humor found in literature for children. (Dianne Lynn Monson, CHILDREN'S RESPONSES TO HUMOROUS SITUATIONS IN LITERATURE, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, U of

Minnesota, 1966) The study had several facets, one of them a comparison of two means of obtaining responses to literature when children read the material themselves. The subjects read excerpts from children's books, chosen because they contained at least four of the following five types of humor: 1) Character humor, 2) humor of Surprise, 3) humor of the Impossible, 4) humor of Words, and 5) humor of the Ridiculous Situation. All children were asked to tell whether the selection was funny. Subjects in one group were asked to write about the funniest aspect of the story. Subjects in the other three groups were asked to respond in a Multiple Choice or True-False situation to indicate which aspect of the story was funniest. Choices for the MC/TF items were taken from responses of a pilot group to open-end questions about the same selections in order to reduce adult influence on responses.

Findings showed that the low socioeconomic children and especially the boys in that group said the selections were funny when they responded to structured questions (Multiple Choice and True-False) more often than when they responded to the open-ended questions. Apparently the intrusion of the writing act influenced recorded response.

A second part of the study focused on the question of whether children judged the excerpts funny. Children in the high IQ group more frequently said excerpts were funny than did children in the low or middle IQ groups. The third section of the study was concerned with choice of favorite type of humor in a selection. The sex, IQ, and socioeconomic level groups used for analysis did not differ significantly in choice of category of humor chosen for most selections. In most cases, there seemed to be as much variation among pupils within a given group as there was between groups. Children in the high socioeconomic and the high reading groups were more alike in their choices of category of humor than were children in the other groups. Choices of category of humor made by boys and girls did not differ significantly. A greater percentage of children in the low intelligence group and in the low socioeconomic group chose humor of Words in some selections more frequently than did children in the middle and high groups.

Landau looked at the relationship between social class status of sixth graders and what they found humorous in excerpts from children's books. (Elliott D. Landau, THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL CLASS STATUS AND WHAT SIXTH GRADE CHILDREN SAY IS FUNNY IN SELECTED EXCERPTS FROM CHILDREN'S LITERATURE, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, New York U, 1955) After reading the selection or hearing it read, the children rated it on a scale of one to six, indicated what part of the story was funny, and told why it was funny. He found that children in the middle socioeconomic group had scores far below those of children in the upper and lower groups. The children reacted more positively when the humorous material was presented orally than when they read it themselves. Types of humor enjoyed frequently were incongruous happenings and impossible and unusual things.

Research suggests that there may be relationships between factors such as age, intelligence, and personal qualities of a reader and his responses to various types of humor. Although results are not always in agreement, studies reported here indicate that younger children and less intelligent subjects tend to enjoy single character humor and laughter at the expense of others whereas older and more intelligent children enjoy the humor of a situation, a more complex form of humor. Junior and senior high school students ranked absurdity ahead of slapstick, satire and whimsy, although there were some differences between socioeconomic level groups and between sex groups. Such results suggest that there may be a social maturational factor involved in response to humor.

None of the studies discussed here is concerned with the influence of teaching practices upon student appreciation of a greater range of types of humor or appreciation of humor represented in specific, well-chosen adolescent literature. A fruitful classroom activity related to studies described above can involve students in analyzing short stories and excerpts from literature to determine the types and/or sophistication levels of humor present. Students may record their own judgments of humor in an excerpt and then analyze the class responses to determine range of response within the class and agreement or non-agreement as to favorite types and levels of humor. In such a survey, students might experiment with various rating scales such as a rating from 1 to 5 or an adaptation of the semantic differential, using polar terms at each end of a continuum. The experiment need not be limited to one classroom. If students want to check the normality of results from their class, it is interesting to replicate the study with one or two other classes and compare the results. The whole matter may simply confirm hypotheses that thirty or forty individuals are not likely to think alike about humor because of varying background and personality factors. Or results may indicate that people tend to follow a pattern of response to one story but give very different kinds of responses to another. Such findings give students reason to go back to a piece of literature in order to look at the literary qualities more closely and to dteremine whether there are factors such as style of writing which may be influencing response.

It is probable that any study of response to humor is limited and influenced by the content chosen for eliciting responses and by the means or recording and analyzing responses. Nevertheless, enough work has been done with humor to provide a theoretical framework for studying reader response. A teacher or researcher may choose as few as four or five categories of humor to look at and may concern himself with distinct kinds of humor (eg. characters, words, situations, etc.) or with relative degrees of sophistication in response to humor (using slapstick, satire, etc.). Perhaps the material reviewed here will give impetus to formal or informal research with high school readers.

DROP ME A PUN!

Don and Alleen Nilsen, Arizona State University

English teachers with good memories still blush when reminded of our ignominous defeat in the like and as controversy with the Winston cigarette advertisers. But since most English teachers are a mild bunch who would rather switch than fight, we suggest that instead of taking on the Madison Avenue tycoons for another wound with the intention of reforming them, we simply give up and begin to appreciate them for what they are--modern masters of the American language.

A good place to start could be with their puns. They are everywhere: on television and radio, on placards and billboards, in newspapers and magazines, and on the products themselves. Some puns are so familiar, e.g. Morton Salt's "When it rains it pours," that they are like dead metaphors in that we often fail to think of the double meaning. Others are so new, e.g. It's out of the bag!" for Pringle's canned potato chips, that it's easy to miss the point unless we know the product.

One way to increase linguistic awareness and interest in the ambiguity of language is to begin the collecting of puns. You might start your collecting by having a bulletin board reserved for puns gathered by both students and teachers. To begin with, just bring in everything you find, but after two or three weeks when enthusiasm begins to wane, specialize by using a central theme. Start with a few puns that you've found and then let the students fill in the rest of the space. Either pin up the actual advertisements or have students hand letter the puns for easier visibility.

For the coming holidays you might start out with the greeting (Sorry, we've lost the name of the company who used it):

MERRY CHRISTMISS
MERRY CHRISTMRS.
MERRY CHRISTMS.
MERRY CHRISTMR.

and then go on to decorate the board with gift advertisements. Norelco shavers advertise "Even our name spells Christmas, Noëlco!" Harley Davidson motorcycles are "The Great American Freedom Machine," while Hondas proudly proclaim "Men's Liberation!" Kodak pocket instamatics are advertised as "The Pick of the Pockets." The potential customer for a Minolta Automatic camera is advised, "Shoot your wife, shoot the kids, then shoot yourself."

Mr. Dee Cee's shirts and slacks "Don't cost an arm and a leg." L'eggs pantyhose with their pseudo French name combine a reference to the container with a reference to where they are worn. "Ugly Duckling" pantyhose undergo a marvelous transformation between the package and the leg (of course it depends on whose leg), and "Turtle" pantyhose "never run."

If you want to focus on food and drink, there's a wealth of rich and sparkling material. Reynold's Aluminum Wrap has "A Product for the Birds!" while Alcoa proclaims "Turkey, Foiled Again!" "Koepplinger bread keeps you slim, naturally." The Daisy Dairy has fortified "Mellow-D Milk" to pour on King Vitamin which "is a royal treat; it regally is!"

Boone's Farm Apple Wine invites you to "Join the Apple Corps" while Pabst Beer tells you "How to get a head," and another company advises "Drink Pfeiffer for the thirst time in your life." Early times Whiskey and Canada Dry Club Soda announce "Our marriage will cause quite a stir," while Old Grand-Dad Bourbon says "If you're without it, you're not with it."

You'll know you've made it as a real collector if at the end of the year instead of bidding farewell to your students you can say with honest expectation "Drop me a pun!" Some of our favorites have come not from Madison Avenue, but from such unlikely vacation spots as Wanship Dam, Utah where there's the "Best Restaurant by a Dam Site!" A nearby garage advertises "C-us if your motor overheats!" In Marshalltown, Iowa an antique shop is called "A Den of Antiquity," and in Ann Arbor, Michigan a restaurant "Dares you to chicken out every Sunday," while another one "Has the crust to tell you that our pizzas are better.

In New Orleans the Howard Johnson Motor Lodge invites people to "Put yourself in our place." At the Detroit airport a hotel asks "Are you still up in the air about reservations?"

Even out in the woods we've found puns. A camper is called "Skamper" and a small tent that goes up with a snap sort of like an umbrella is called a "Pop Tent." Driving along the highway in Indiana we saw a garbage truck proudly advertising "Our business is picking up," and we passed a VW dealer who claimed to have "More bugs than a bad housekeeper." A sign on a midwest optical store reads "There's more to a vision examination than meets the eye," and a nearby competitor specializing in shatter resistant lenses claims "Our glasses are good to the last drop!"

Of course the purpose in all this is really much more than to develop an admiration for the professional skills of advertisers. Though he probably didn't envision today's mass media, we're confident that working with puns is one of the kinds of activities Wilbur Hatfield had in mind in 1935 when he wrote in his EXPERIENCE CURRICULUM, "...an essential in teaching correct English is, strangely enough, less emphasis on errors and more emphasis on interesting language activities."

The really bright moments come when the students themselves get turned on to the ambiguity that's everywhere in language; for example, when a boy named Reynold entitles his theme "Reynold's Rap," or when under the influence of the Dartmouth Conference you make a plea for more talk in class and someone brings you a bottle of Tåak, the new hot drink mix from General Mills. But until that happy day when students spontaneously come up with their own ways and purposes for creating puns, here are four activities to help them get started.

1. Pretend you have a certain business with a marquee-like sign where you entertain your customers with business related puns. Think up enough puns so that you can have a new one every other week for a whole year. We know it's possible because we've seen it done by a doughnut shop which goes the hole way with flour power. We've also seen it done by a service station whose puns are a gas!

2. Jump into a controversy. Find two products that are competing, take sides and wage competitive advertising campaigns in class. Famous cases from the past have been the butter-margarine war, the Hertz and Avis rent-a-car (We're number two so we try harder") conflict and the Volkswagen (Ugly Bug) versus the big beautiful cars campaign. Right now the hottest one going is 7-Up

against the Cola drinks. Notice how it is usually the underdog who attacks and by using a reverse twist turns an apparent disadvantage into an advantage.

3. Invent products to go with catchy names. In some ways television is taking us back to the oral tradition of earlier times which gave us many of our folktales, our proverbs, and our old nursery rhymes. Words and phrases from the old oral tradition which roll off the tongue and slip firmly into the mind are being exploited by advertisers, especially those aiming their messages at children too young to relate to printed advertisements. For example, children's games are given such names as "The Last Straw," "Barrel of Monkeys," "Don't Spill the Beans," "Hickety-Pickety," and "Cat and Mouse." Other more modern, but equally catchy titles include "Bingo Matic," "Booby Trap," "Don't Bug Me," "Stay Alive," "Gnip-Gnop," "Which Witch," "Bug Out," and "Square Off." After an informal observation of some of these products and their names, as a class jot down other catchy phrases and titles and then as individual projects invent games or products to go with the names. Describing and explaining the newly invented product is a good writing exercise. Preparing advertising campaigns for some of the best products could also be worthwhile.

4. Collect the names of various products and then use them to write original paragraphs about entirely different subjects. Using the familiar words in a different context suddenly adds a new perspective which pushes the double meaning to the forefront. The paragraphs will flow more smoothly than might be imagined because product names tend to have similar connotations. For example, household cleaning products try to make the best of a bad job with such bright names as "Cheer," "Joy," "Breeze," "Gala," "Lestoil," "Comet," "Dash," and "Dreft." Car models tend to be named after sleek and powerful animals: "Cougar," "Jaguar," "Firebird," "Barracuda," "Road Runner," "Mustang," "Maverick," "Thunderbird," etc. It was because of the contrast that the VW "bug" appealed to our sense of humor.

BACKGROUND TO HUMOR

Sheila Schwartz, State University College, New Paltz, New York

One of the most characteristic aspects of what it means to be human is the ability to laugh. Although written humor can reach only the literate, visual humor has a universality which enables people in all nations, educated or uneducated, to laugh at a Chaplin movie or at the antics of mimes such as Marcel Marceau.

Comedy, like tragedy, helps to reveal the unchanging nature of human beings and to provide a link for all mankind. We find, for example, that the same humor which amused audiences in Ancient Greece appeals to contemporary audiences and jokes, classified by Freud in Vienna, are re-told as new.

The study of humor begins with comedy (which originated in the improvisations which took place during the rites of Dionysus in Ancient Greece) and is of particular value in an electives program, not only because such a study is interesting to secondary school students, but because theories of comedy have engaged the interest of many important thinkers in other content areas. Psychologists such as Lipps and Freud have studied it as have the philosophers Schopenhauer, Bergson, and Langer. The Greek philosopher, Aristotle, provided the original philosophical model for the study of comedy.

THE COMIC POINT OF VIEW

The comic point of view is a leveling one--which constantly points out to man the absurdity of the human condition. Comedy reminds man that in the midst of glory his accomplishment and freedom are fettered by the prison of his own body. In the movie, BOB AND CAROL AND TED AND ALICE, Robert Culp, the hero figure, bounds into bed with two girls. Elliot Gould, the comic relief, first spends much time gargling, brushing his teeth, and spraying himself with deodorant. Woddy Allen does a similar comic bit in PLAY IT AGAIN, SAM, when he takes a big swallow of Binaca before his date arrives. Romeo paces and recites soliloquies before scaling the balcony, Ben, the comic hero of THE GRADUATE, brushes his teeth while waiting for Mrs. Robinson.

The comic point of view reminds us of our own finiteness and at the same time, through the lusty exuberance of laughter, comforts us for this same finiteness.

THE COMFORT OF COMEDY

Man attempts to ease his frustrations and disappointments and the incongruities of life, through humor. Northrop Frye attributes the comfort of comedy to the fact that, in contrast to tragedy, at the end of the play the hero does not die. "The ritual pattern behind the catharsis of comedy is the resurrection that follows the death, the epiphany or manifestation of the risen hero." (Northrop Frye, ANATOMY OF CRITICISM, Princeton, NJ: Princeton U. Press, 1957, p.238.)

We see examples of this in TOM JONES, in which the hero is barely saved from hanging, in CAT BALLOU in which the same device is used with the heroine, as it also is in the BEGGAR'S OPERA. Suzanne Langer describes the comfort of comedy in the following way:

> Comedy is an art form that arises naturally wherever people are gathered to celebrate life, in spring festivals, triumphs, birthdays, weddings, or initiations. For it expresses the elementary strains and resolutions of animate nature, the animal drives that persist even in human nature, the

> delight man takes in his special mental gifts that make him the lord of creation; it is an image of human vitality holding its own in the world amid the surprises of unplanned coincidence. The most obvious occasions for the performance of comedies are thanks or challenges to fortune. What justifies the term "Comedy" is not that the ancient ritual procession, the Comus, honoring the god of that name, was the source of this great art form--for comedy has arisen in many parts of the world, where the Greek god with his particular worship was unknown--but that the Comus was a fertility rite, and the god it celebrated a fertility god, a symbol of perpetual rebirth, eternal life. (Susanne K. Langer, "The Great Dramatic Forms: The Comic Rhythm", in Marvin Felheim, COMEDY. New York: Harcourt, 1962, p. 244.)

Comedy sets up a rhythm of sheer vitality and general exhilaration because "it presents the very image of 'livingness' and the perception of it is exciting." (Susanne K. Langer, "The Great Dramatic Forms: The Comic Rhythm", in Marvin Felheim, COMEDY. New York: Harcourt, 1962, p. 244.) We laugh at comedy not because of the story but because the hero achieves a temporary triumph of the world. This is why we delight in Charlie Chaplin's war against mass production in MODERN TIMES. It is also why we can laugh at and find comfort in comic conventions which would never amuse us in real life. To illustrate, in one Laurel and Hardy film, the villain orders them out on a window ledge. Their choice is either to have him shoot them if they do not jump, or to jump and get killed. This situation does not alarm us. We are comforted by the knowledge that heroes do not die in comedies. We do not view this kind of dangerous situation realistically and therefore it does not disturb the rhythm of life which is inherent in all comedy.

Comedy also comforts us because it enables us to feel superior to the people we are watching. Man is always able to recognize himself and the traits he shares in common with other men while at the same time feeling superior to what he is watching. To illustrate, in the film THE GRADUATE, viewers can share Ben Braddock's ineptness as a lover and recognize the universality of his qualms, and at the same time feel superior to the schlemiel-like hero. The audience laughs and understands his uneasiness when he tries to arrange a hotel room for his first encounter with Mrs. Robinson but each viewer feels that he would have been able to make these arrangements with greater ease and savoir faire.

Each of the great comedians has been aware of this need of the viewer to feel superior to some physical or personality trait and it is usually this weakness which becomes the most memorable aspect of the performer. Jack Benny was supposed to be stingy, Woody Allen is ugly and supposedly inept, Judy Holliday, a brilliant comedienne, rost to fame through her portrayal of a dumb blonde in the Garson Kanin play, "Born Yesterday." Phyllis Diller's comedy was usually based on her homeliness and it was rumored that her comedy act would go down hill when she had her face lifted and became glamorous looking.

THE COMIC MODES

OLD COMEDY

The comic mode of Old Comedy is usually associated with the works of Aristophanes, the most famous comic writer of Ancient Greece. His works show us the Greek love of life and their delight in the senses. "The mad, rollicking, irresponsible fun of the Old Comedy, its verve and vitality and exuberant, overglowing energy of life," (Edith Hamilton, THE GREEK WAY. New York: Norton Paperback, 1958, p.24), are a reflection of this philosophy of life.

The primary appeal of Old Comedy is to the intellect and its aim was to arouse thoughtful laughter. Political satire, irreverence toward authority, emphasis on

the folly of war, and mockery of social institutions were considered suitable topics for it.

NEW COMEDY

Fifty years after the death of Aristophanes, a form of comedy called "New Comedy" came into prominence. On a lower level of artistic achievement than Old Comedy, it used stereotyped plots, had an essentially middle-class outlook, and was far less imaginative and original. The targets of its satire were rarely as significant as those of the Old Comedy. Instead of reacing down into the depths of society to effect substantial changes in the framework of society, it ligytly played upon the surface of society. It emphasized everyday details, a unified plot, romantic love, and detailed characterization of individuals. Modern character comedy and the comedy of manners are the descendents of this form.

Rome was the home of this form of comedy, its principal writers were Plautus and Terence and in their works were many elements which have become familiar to us in drawing-room comedy or bedroom farce; Henpecked husbands, elderly men lusting after young girls, fathers and sons competing for the same woman, wives discovering cheating husbands and even the archetypal dominating mother figure.

> The domestic drama, which is essentially the drama as we know it today, has its direct origin in these Latin plays. The intimate domesticity of family life is one of its most impressive manifestations, the Roman family, is the pivot they all turn on, and character after character is shown which the theatre has never let go of since. Here is the very first appearance upon the world's stage of the figure so dear to audiences everywhere, the Mother, essentially what she is to be through all the centuries down to our own with the white carnation and Mother's Day. Greece never knew her. The Mother, capitalized, was foreign to Greek ideas. But the Romans in such matters were just like ourselves and often more so. (Edith Hamilton, THE ROMAN WAY. New York: The New American Library, 1957, pp. 21-22.)

The comedy of manners of the Restoration Period (1660-1700) reflected the manners and conventions of an urbana and satirical group. The characters in the comedy of manners were more likely to be types than individuals. Satire in these plays is directed against individuals who deviate from a norm or do not quite measure up to society's expectations. Favorite targets include fops, coxcombs, would-be-wits jealous husbands, and non-conformists in general. The dialogue in these plays is witty and polished and amusing to us even today. The appeal of these comedies is to our intellects and urban senses of humor. They amuse, as did the New Comedy, but do not inspire or uplift us as did the plays of Aristophanes.

One characteristic of the comedy-of-manners is an immoral love game played by a roughish and amoral set of lovers. (Note: Ingmar Bergman used all of these elements in his film SMILES OF A SUMMER NIGHT). In the twentieth-century this has become the bedroom farce which usually deals with illicit relations between a woman and her lover.

Drawing room comedy, also derived from New Comedy, is another descendent of the comedy of manners. We use the term to describe a comic play about interaction in polite society. These comedies usually serve an escapist function rather than one of social criticism. This type of comedy is a perennial favorite on Broadway. Examples of this are such works by Neil Simon as THE ODD COUPLE, and LAST OF THE RED HOT LOVERS.

Among the comic devices used in High Comedy are: odd names such as Mrs. Oddfish (the curate's wife) given to the characters, the use of opposites to create paradox (the dancing master who is lame is called Little Cripplegate), comic twistings of phrases (in SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER, Miss Hardcastle observes: "You mean that in this hypocritical age there are few that do not condemn in public what they practice in private, and they think they pay every debt to virtue when they praise it."), and double entendres.

Oscar Wilde was noted for his satirical epigrams and his first dramatic success, LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN (1892) contains memorable bits of wit such as:

"I can resist everything except temptation."

"A cynic is a man who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing."

In his play THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST, Wilde uses such comic devices as "running gags; incongruous groupings; unexpected truths; plays on words; distortion in the form of both understatement and exaggeration; epigrams; appeals to the superiority of the audience; and incidental saitric remarks at the expense of aristocracy, the church, snobbery, education, fashion, art, culture, politics and marriage." (Leonard Feinberg, INTRODUCTION TO SATIRE. Ames, Iowa: The Iowa State University Press, 1967, p.80.) These techniques to induce laughter have been used by humorists as diverse as Samuel Beckett and Lenny Bruce in the twentieth century.

WHY WE LAUGH

Sigmund Freud, in his work, JOKES AND THEIR RELATION TO THE UNCONSCIOUS (1898), advanced the hypothesis that the pleasure derived from humor and wit is similar to the psychic relief experienced in dreams. Both dreams and humor he saw as the expression of thoughts repressed in the unconscious. A sudden burst of laughter represents a healthy release of psychic energy. Through humor, the repressed thought can achieve spontaneous liberation.

Freud differentiates between wit, which is made through art or language, and the comic which is found in a comical person or situation. People are made comical through placement in comical situations, through mimicking of them, caricaturing them, and through their immoderate and inappropriate actions, such as those of clowns, We laugh at immoderate and inappropriate actions because they arouse a feeling of superiority in us as we judge ourselves in relation to the actor. Here are some additional reasons why we laugh:

Exaggeration. This is an example of immoderate behavior. In Feydeau's THE ITALIAN STRAW HAT, each of the characters is an exaggeration. The bride is excessively passive, immature and simpering, her father is exaggeratedly protective; the old man is exaggeratedly deaf. These are exaggerated personality traits and we see them all the time in television comedy. Lucille Ball is exaggeratedly inept, Archie Bunker exaggeratedly prejudiced, etc.

Another kind of exaggeration is that of physical characteristics. We see this in clown's makeup, Jimmy Durante's nose, Martha Raye's wide mouth, and Woody Allen's size and face.

Verbal exaggeration, is also a source of humor. This is known as overstatement or hyperbole. Here is an example of this kind of humor:

I understand there are a good many Southerners in the room tonight. I know the South very well. I spent twenty years there one night. . .

--Dick Gregory (Larry, Wilde, THE GREAT COMEDIANS TALK ABOUT COMEDY, New York: The Citadel Press, 1968, p.250.)

Incongruity. We laugh at things that seem out of time, out of place, or out of character. In THE ITALIAN STRAW HAT, we find a number of incongruities which contribute to the humor of the work: the bride's father carries a heavy tree with him at all times almost as if it is appended to his body; a horse eats the straw hat of a lady while she and her lover are hidden in the bushes; the wedding party mistakes a hat shop for the mayor's office, etc.

Much of May West's humor arose from the incongruity of having a woman who was built like a Mack Truck (and thought by many to be a female impersonator), acting as if she were the sexiest, most beautiful, and desirable woman in the world. In Neil Simon's LAST OF THE RED HOT LOVERS, we are amused at the incongruity of a middle-aged man being so afraid of his mother's finding out about an illict affair that he brings his own glasses with him in his attaché case.

Jules Feiffer combines incongruity of place and character in a cartoon from THE EXPLAINERS (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960) in which a monk reviews the Bible with all of the cliches used by book reviewers, such as "It purports to be a theological and historical document, and while this reviewer does not question its sincerity he can only regret the publisher's failure to include a bibliography."

Zero Mostel's mincing tiptoeing walk amuses us because an elephantine man is walking so delicately, and in the Zero Mostel film A FUNNY THING HAPPENED TO ME ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM much of the humor is based on incongruity of place, of time, and of character.

Reversal is another kind of incongruity. When Woody Allen in PLAY IT AGAIN, SAM says in a monologue that his wife said their sex life was no good, he follows this with the unexpected reversal, "How could she say that; we didn't have any."

Unnatural action is a kind of incongruity that makes us laugh and more people remember the walk, the cane, and the pretended nonchalance of Charlie Chaplin than they do the plots of his movies.

Freud referred to incongruity as "absurdity" and he described this technique for amusing us as "presenting something that is stupid and nonsensical, the sense of which lies in the revelation and demonstration of something else that is stupid and nonsensical." (Sigmund Freud, JOKES AND THEIR RELATION UNCONSCIOUS, New York: Norton, 1960, p.58.) As an example of the absurd, Freud tells the following joke about a Jewish boy:

> Itzig had been declared fit for service in the artillery. He was clearly an intelligent lad, but intractable and without any interest in the service. One of his superior officers, who was friendly disposed to him, took him on one side and said to him: "Itzig, you're no use to us. I'll give you a piece of advice; (1) buy yourself a cannon and make yourself independent."

Another aspect of incongruity defined by Freud was illogical train of thought. Freud illustrates this with the following joke:

> The bridegroom was paying his first visit to the bride's house in the company of the broker, and while they were waiting in the salon for the family to appear, the broker drew attention to a cupboard with glass doors in which the finest set of silver plate was exhibited. "There! Look at that! You can see how rich these people are."--"But", asked the suspicious young man, "mightn't it be possible that these fine things

were borrowed to give an impression of wealth."--"What an idea!" answered the broker protestingly. "Who do you think would lend these people anything?" (Sigmund Freud, JOKES AND THEIR RELATION TO THE UNCONSCIOUS, New York: Norton, 1960, p. 64, translated by James Strachey.)

Unification, in which dissimilar elements are strung together with the conjunction "and", is another aspect of incongruous humor described by Freud. He illustrates unification with the following joke:

> January is the month in which we offer our dear friends wishes, and the rest are the months in which they are not fulfilled. (Sigmund Freud, JOKES AND THEIR RELATION TO THE UNCONSCIOUS, New York: Norton, 1960, p. 66, translated by James Strachey.)

Representation by the opposite is another kind of incongruity. Pointing out that this technique is not limited to humor, Freud quotes Marc Antony's speech with the refrain, "But Brutus is an honorable man." Since this is the technique which characterizes irony, Freud calls this category of incongruity, ironical jokes or humor.

Ambiguity is another source of humor. The possibility of more than one meaning has always been a source of humor. Freud categorized the different types of multiple use of words in the following way:

> a) Cases of the double meaning of a name and of a thing denoted by it. For instance: "Discharge thyself of out company, Pistol!" (Shakespeare, II HENRY IV, ii, 4)
> b) Double meaning proper, or play upon words. . .i.e. A doctor as he came away from a lady's bedside, said to her husband with a shake of his head: "I don't like her looks." "I've not liked her looks for a long time", the husband hastened to agree. (Sigmund Freud, JOKES AND THEIR RELATION TO THE UNCONSCIOUS, New York: Norton, 1960, pp. 38-39, translated by James Strachey.)

Another source of ambiguous humor is the double entendre. Freud believed that the second or double meaning in humor is always sexual. To illustrate, he quotes a joke made at the time of the Dreyfus case, "This girl reminds me of Dreyfus. The army doesn't believe in her innocence." (Sigmund Freud, JOKES AND THEIR RELATION TO THE UNCONSCIOUS, New York: Norton, 1960, p.40, translated by James Strachey.)

Puns are another category of ambiguity. Puns usually depend on the substitution of one word for another with a similar sound. A good example of punning is the title of a recent book dealing with changes in hair styles throughout history. The book is Betty Wason's HAIR TODAY. ... AND GONE TOMORROW (NY: Scholastic, 1969).

Ruses and disguises are another kind of ambiguity which makes for humor. The delightful comedy SOME LIKE IT HOT with Marilyn Monroe and Jack Lemmon based its humor completely on the disguise of two virile young men as members of an all-girl orchestra.

Anticipation. Many great comedians have used anticipation as a source of their humor. Audiences wait for certain lines which have become part of a particular performer's repertory, ("Come up and see me sometime"), or they wait for characteristic actions such as Chaplin's pratfalls and dances, or the inoffensive slapstick of clowns.

Protection. Another reason we laugh is when we see cruel and terrible actions

which we know are not really happening. Everyone is really being protected from being hurt and this helps us to laugh at such escapades as the cliff hanging of Harold Lloyd, Buster Keaton, and Laurel and Hardy.

Displacement. Freud defined this technique as the "diversion of the train of thought, the displacement of the psychical emphasis on to a topic other than the opening one." (Sigmund Freud, JOKES AND THEIR RELATION TO THE UNCONSCIOUS, New York: Norton, 1960, pp.51, translated by James Strachey.) The following joke illustrates this technique:

> An impoverished individual borrowed 25 florins from a prosperous acquaintance, with many asseverations of his necessitous circumstances. The very same day his benefactor met him again in a restaurant with a place of salmon mayonnaise in front of him. The benefactor reproached him: "What? You borrow money from me and then order for yourself salmon mayonnaise? Is that what you've used my money for?" I don't understand you", replied the object of the attack; "if I haven't any money I can't eat salmon mayonnaise, and if I have some money I mustn't eat salmon mayonnaise. Well, then when am I to eat salmon mayonnaise?" (Sigmund Freud, JOKES AND THEIR RELATION TO THE UNCONSCIOUS, New York: Norton, 1960, p.50, translated by James Strachey.)

In an off-Broadway revue based on MAD MAGAZINE, one of the funniest skits involved this kind of displacement. A mother, seeing her teenage son sneaking out started to scold him that he couldn't go out until he had finished his homework. At that the boy went into an antic act in which he said "Goody, goody" and added that he wanted to stay at home alone with his mommy and as he started to passionately chase his mother around the room she called the father to insist that the boy go out.

Indirect Representation is another verbal source of humor identified by Freud. In this category he included jokes of allusion (he includes "Every fathom a queen" as a take-off of "Every inch a king") and humor based on analogy. He lists: "It is almost impossible to carry the torch of truth through a crowd without singeing someone's beard."

Condensation (reduction) is another source of humor. To illustrate, Freud quotes the following remark made of a person in public life, "He has a great future behind him." The linguistic process of condensation, accompanied by the formation of a substitute, gives us pleasure and makes us laugh. A long-winded woman said to a listener, "Please wait just a moment and I'll give you the pleasure of my undivided monologue."

Satire. This technique, although generally considered part of humor, can be serious, cruel, and biting, and not at all related to what makes us laugh. There are two technical terms which are related to satire and which should be taught to students.

1) Horation satire is gentle, urbana, and non-vindictive and attempts to make its points gently with sympathetic laughter and 2) Juvenalian satire which is biting, angry, invective. Juvenalian satire points with moral indignation and contempt to the corruption and evil of mankind and human institutions. Both kinds of satire are named for the classical Roman writers who used them. THE NEW YORKER magazine is an excellent source for contemporary Horatian satire.

A good contemporary example of Juvenalian satire is Philip Roth's OUR GANG, a political satire about the Nixon Administration. The following short excerpt will show how this type differs from the Horatian.

Tricky Holds a Press Conference

MR. ASSLICK: Sir, as regards your San Dementia statement of April 3, the discussion it provoked seems now to have centered on your unequivocal declaration that you are a firm believer in the rights of the unborn. Many seem to believe that you are destined to be to the unborn what Martin Luther King was to the black people of America, and the late Robert F. Charisma to the disadvantaged chicanos and Puerto Ricans of the country. There are those who say that your San Dementia statement will go down in the history of books alongside Dr. King's famous "I have a dream" address. Do you find these comparisons apt?

TRICKY: Well, of course, Mr. Asslick, Martin Luther King was a very great man, as we all must surely recognize now that he is dead. He was a great leader in the struggle for equal rights for his people, and yes, I do believe he'll find a place in history. But of course we must not forget that he was not the President of the United States, as I am, empowered by the Constitution, as I am; and this is an important distinction to bear in mind. Working within the Constitution I think I will be able to accomplish far more for the unborn of this entire nation than did Dr. King working outside the Constitution for the born of a single race. This is meant to be no criticism of Dr. King, but just a simple statement of fact. (NY: Bantam, 1972, pp. 10-11)

This excerpt from Roth's book completely fulfills the following definition of satire which is a good one to use for teaching purposes as a yardstick against which to evaluate whether or not something is satirical.

> Like other arts, the best satire is concerned with the nature of reality. Unlike other arts, which emphasize what is real, satire emphasizes what seems to be real but is not. It ridicules man's naive acceptance of individuals and institutions at face value. That ridicule may be expressed in amused or bitter terms, but the essence of satire is the revelation of the contrast between reality and pretense. . . .
>
> Perhaps the best way to determine, in each case, whether humor or satire is being used is to evaluate their intention. "The laughter of comedy is relatively purposeless," David Worchester suggests. "The laughter of satire is directed toward an end." (Leonard Feinberg, INTRODUCTION TO SATIRE, Ames, Iowa: The Iowa State U Press, 1967, pp. 3-4.)

The art of Daumier, Hogarth, and Grosz illustrate the use of Juvenalian satire in art.

Comic Strip Humor. Cartoons and comic strips have come a long way from the days in which they were read under desks or inside the covers of more respectable books. Today they are examined as important sources of insight into the American way of life. Marshall McLuhan, in UNDERSTANDING MEDIA, explains that "high-brows" such as Pablo Picasso have been long-time fans of American comics because they find in this popular art, "an authentic imaginative reaction to official action." (Marshall McLuhan, UNDERSTANDING MEDIA, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1966, p. 167.) It is "the clown reminding us of all the life and faculty that we have omitted from our daily routines. . . ." (McLuhan, p. 167.)

In theorizing about the humor of Al Capp's "L'il Abner," McLuhan states that readers enjoy this comic strip because "the Dogpatch predicament of helpless ineptitude was a paradigm of the human situation in general."(McLuhan, p. 165.) He quotes Al Capp's description of his technique in the following way:

> "I simply involve my people in the consequences of their own stupidity and take away their brains so they can do nothing about it." (McLuhan, p.166.)

Stephen Becker, in another theoretical work, describes Capp's work in a way which relates it to Freud's theories of humor described above and also to techniques used by playwrights and authors to achieve the humor in actions and words which the cartoonist can accomplish visually:

> His (Capp's) puns have some consistency and meaning. They either expose a basic fradulence in their objects, or illuminate some swindling charade long accepted as legitimate by the public. This is particularly true of his symbols--Kikapoo Joy Juice, with its almost magical powers; the Shmoo; the Kigmy. Of these, the Shmoo was the most interesting, and the most controversial. It was a winsome, bulbous, friendly little creature, totally boneless, 'which, when broiled, came out steak and, when fried, tasted like chicken. It also laid neatly packages and bottles of eggs and milk, all carefully labeled 'Grade A' '. . .The poor Kigmy was all scapegoat in one. . .when all of man's frustrations had been taken out on the beast, and the insatiable Kigmy asked for more, man would inevitably find that he had exhausted his capacity for hate. . . . (Stephen Becker, COMIC ART IN AMERICA, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1959, pp. 190-191.)

Absurd Humor (Black Humor). Perhaps the most typical humor of the twentieth century is black humor, defined as laughing to keep from going mad. Bruce Jay Friedman has described this kind of humor in the following way:

> You hear an awful lot about the 'fading line between fantasy and reality' in the modern world. . . .you are Alice today and stick your head out of doors now and then, you know that there is a nervousness, a tempo, a near-hysterical new beat in the air, a punishing isolation and loneliness of a strange, frenzied, new kind. It is in the music and the talk and the films and the theatre and it is in the prose style of Joe Heller and Terry Southern. You can find it in Gogol and Isaac Babel, too. . .what it really comes down to is THE NEW YORK TIMES, which is the source and foundation and bible of black humor. The Secretary of State, solemnly reviewing the Vietnam crisis, suddenly begins to strangle on a wild gastronomical metaphor. Hanoi's support of the rebels, that's the 'meat and potatoes issues.' When we get to the root of that, then we can consider the salt and papper issues. The bombing raids? Secondary stuff, just a lot of garlic and oregano talk, really, just a bunch of diversionary sweet basic and East Indian nutmeg baloney. . . .
>
> You guess that it has always been this way, that Tolstoi must have had this unreal sensation when Napoleon came east. . .
>
> 'How does it feel?' the TV boys ask Mrs. Malcolm X when her husband is assassinated. We send our planes off for nice, easygoing, not-too-touch bombing raids on North Vietnam. . .It confirms your belief that a new. . . chord of absurdity has been struck in the land, that there is a new mutative style of behavior afoot, one that can only be dealt with by a new, one-foot-in-the-asylum style of fiction. (Bruce Jay Friedman, "Foreward", BLACK HUMOR, NY: Bantam, 1965, pp. viii-ix.)

The most respected of the black humorists is Samuel Beckett. To Beckett, man is absurd and comic, the butt of a tremendous cosmic joke. The fact that he should seek and strive for what escapes him in the present and will continue to escape him throughout the remainder of his meaningless life, is used by Beckett as a source of ironic humor. Man is the butt of cosmic ironies, practical jokes, and paradoxical experiences. Endurance has no heroic dimensions. It is comic precisely because it is senseless.

This absurd humor is the kind we see in Joseph Heller's CATCH-22, in which the hero complains that he doesn't want to go out there and fight because people are shooting at him out there. It is the humor of an American soldier complaining

that you just can't trust the Vietnamese--the minute you turn your back they're shooting at you.

It is the humor of a joke attributed to the Comedian Red Buttons in which he says: "When I was young we were very poor. My mother took in washing, my father was unemployed, my sister was on the streets, my brother was a bum. We were so poor, we never had enough to eat. I had big holes in my shoes and had to put paper in to cover them. Things were really desperate--and then came the Depression."

Beckett's humor is epitomized by one of his tramps in WAITING FOR GODOT, who wants to hang himself. He is prevented from doing so only by the fact that the one rope he owns is holding up his pants. Beckett's protagonists are always bums or tramps because he intentionally uses the lowest level of society to emphasize the universal human condition which makes clowns or fools of all men.

50 SHORT FILMS: PARODIES AND SATIRES (FUNNY AND NOT SO FUNNY)

With the advent of short films and English teacher enthusiasm about getting those films into the curriculum has come at least one problem, the tendancy of too many teachers to use too many serious films. Exciting films like "Why Man Creates" and "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" and "Nahanni" are much worth using, but sometimes the teacher might consider using some amusing but pointed films, films that spark the imagination through humor. Additionally, English teachers might consider using any number of satirical films, humorous or otherwise. The 50 films briefly annotated below deserve classroom use.

4 PARODIES

1. "Blaze Glory" (Pyramid, 10 min., color), a delightful parody of the western with stereotypes of the hero(wearing white to signify his purity and courage) and heroine and villains and all the other stock characters of the western. Exaggerated but delightful spoof that will amuse most viewers.
2. "Song of the Prairie" (Rembrandt Films, 18 min., color), a parody of the musical western with puppets portraying virtually all the stereotyped figures and actions and settings and music of the genre.
3. "Two" (Macmillan, 9 min., color), a sophisticated parody of Fellini's films or many other modern Italian filmmakers. Two people talk meaninglessly but endlessly on a beach, each surpassing the other in mouthing platitudes.
4. "Vicious Cycles" (Pyramid, 7 min., color), a very funny spoff of motorcycle gang movies with hoods challenging the good guys. A very funny movie.

30 SATIRES (FUNNY ONES, AT LEAST KIND OF)

1. "An Adventure With a Naked Boy" (Contemporary Films, 24 min., black and white), a very young and quite naked boy on a tram causes all kinds of reactions from the other passengers, everything from sympathy and affection to horror and indignation. A lovely attack on people's morality and bureaucracy.
2. "Alf, Bill and Fred" (Contemporary, 8 min., color), a cartoon fable about Bill (who inherits a fortune), Alf (his friend, the duck), and Fred (also a friend and dog). A wonderful satire of contemporary attitudes toward money and friendship.
3. "Automania 2000" (Contemporary, 10 min., color), a lively satire about the growing encroachment of cars on mankind and man's life on earth.
4. "Because That's Why (Film Images, 17 min., black and white), two junior executives go off on one of the maddest hunting trips possible and finally bag their only game of the day, an automobile. A wicked attack on the mentality of too many businessmen and the pointlessness of too many lives today.
5. "The Bird" (Contemporary, 5 min., color), the battle of the sexes in a film almost certain to irritate the feminists.
6. "Claude" (SL Films, 3 min., color), a cartoon about Claude whose mother and father both obviously feel he will amount to absolutely nothing and how he destroys them quite literally.
7. "Comput-Her Baby" (Pyramid, 4 min., color), a brief satire on computerized dating.
8. "The Critic" (Learning Corporation, 4 min., color), a 71 year old man's voice is heard as he makes critical comments about a film, a nice spoof about criticism and critics.
9. "Enter Hamlet"((Pyramid, 4 min., color), an animated takeoff on the "To be or not to be" soliloquy with each word of the spoken soliloquy being given a picture, resulting in a series of visual puns.
10. "1501½" (Contemporary, 8 min., color), a young man rents a one room bath apartment, a result of an architect's goof up in planning a building. His plight in dwelling in his abbreviated space is a nice satire on contemporary problems.

11. "Five Minute Thrill" (Contemporary, 5 min., color), after a director indicates that all an audience wants in a film today is thrills galore, a five minute film of violence and death pours out at us. Macabre and sometimes funny with corpse after corpse showing up on screen.
12. "Frogs" (Pyramid, 15 min., color), a film essay on the frog and people's fascination with frogs, everything from frog jewelry to a frog jumping contest.
13. "Genius Man" (ACI Films, 1½ min., color), a color cartoon showing one very bright and creative caveman bringing to his peers his inventions, all of which are ignored until he invents the club and warfare.
14. "The Great Man" (Contemporary, 3 min., color), a satire about following the leader as each follower attempts to puff up the leader.
15. "Help! My Snowman's Burning Down" (Contemporary, 10 min., color), a comedy of the absurd about a man living in a bathtub on a dock and all the "Everyman" problems he encounters.
16. "Hypothese Beta" (Contemporary, 7 min., color), a seemingly funny but ultimately chilling allegory about the life of a punched hole in a computer programming card.
17. "Insomnia" (International Film Bureau, 17 min., color), a funny satire on horror stories as a man reads a horror book at night and some of the pages come alive.
18. "The Interview" (Learning Corporation of America, 5 min., color), an interview between a jazz musician and an interviewer who clearly knows nothing about music, an excercise in lack of communication.
19. "Love Me, Love, Me, Love Me" (Contemporary, 8 min., color), an extremly funny, totally irrevelant story of two men, one a bum loves by everyone, the other a nice person no one seems to like. How our unloved hero finally discovers the secret of being loved and what happens to him and his stuffed alligator named Charlie is the substance of the story which finally ends with the moral, "When it comes to love, no one really has it good, especially stuffed alligators named Charlie."
20. "Modern Sports Coaching" (Contemporary, 7 min., color), a cartoon poking fun at the win-at-all-costs coach and his final death.
21. "Munro" (Rembrandt, 9 min., color), a four year old boy is drafted into the army and Jules Feiffer, creator of the film, gets a chance to take pokes at the military mentality.
22. "People Soup" (Learning Corporation, 13 min., color), two young boys make up a magic concoction from kitchen ingredients, one becoming a chicken and the second soon thereafter becoming a large dog. Useful for many students at many grade levels.
23. "The Question" (Contemporary, 10 min., color), an animated picture of the struggle of man for knowledge and truth as authorities are only too happy to give our hero their answer to the question, what is worthwhile?
24. "Replay" (Contemporary, 8 min., color), a happy comparison of today's generation with earlier generations.
25. "The Rise and Fall of the Great Lakes" (Pyramid, 17 min., color), a geology and ecology lesson about the Great Lakes and where they're going unless man does something about the problems soon.
26. "The Season" (Contemporary, 15 min., color), a slow film to begin but ultimately a most satisfying satire, often very funny, about Christmas and its overly commercialized nature today.
27. "That's Me" (Contemporary, 15 min., black and white), a social worker tries to talk a Puerto Rican school drop-out into rejoining the world. The social worker knows all the right questions, but the drop-out has some quite unconventional answers. A lovely example of improvisational acting with Andrew Duncan and Alan Arkin.
28. "Time Piece" (Contemporary, 10 min., color), a comedy of the absurd about man and the ever-present problem of time hedging him in. One of the standard short films used in English class, deservedly so.

29. "The Violinist" (Learning Corporation of America, 7 min., color), Ernest Pintoff's cartoon about Harry who is a nice guy but who plays a lousy violin. Harry goes to Andreas who teaches how to play the violin with feeling. A spoff on art and suffering.
30. "The Violin Lesson" (Contemporary, 10 min., color), a stereotyped violin teacher has a stereotyped young violin student and as they begin playing together, they produce cacophony. A trick ending might intrigue students.

16 SATIRES (NOT SO FUNNY)

1. "Ares Contre Atlas" (Macmillian, 7½ min., color), Manuel Otero's five sight gags about war and its absurdity.
2. "Ark" (Arthur Barr Productions, 20 min., color), a nameless modern Noah gathers animals for his greenhouse like ark in the midst of a pollution-ridden world only to see rats attack his ark and finally to see the ultimately more dangerous animal, man, ruin any chance of saving his world.
3. "A Chairy Tale" (Contemporary, 10 min., black and white), Norman McLaren's pixillation film about the chair which refuses to be used unless the man wheedles and pleases the chair. The film is about many things, man's inability to communicate, man's willingness to use things or people without thinking, or the battle between the sexes.
4. "The Fat and the Lean" (Pyramid, 15 min., black and white), Roman Polanski's allegory about the nature of freedom. A deeply disturbing film about a young man indentured to an old and obese man and the kind of freedom desired by the young man and the kind of freedom offered by the older man.
5. "The Flat" (Contemporary, 15 min., black and white), a surrealist comedy in which a young man is imprisoned in a dismal flat. A terrifying picture of "Everyman" and his contemporary problems.
6. "A Funny Thing Happened My Way to Golgotha" (Contemporary, 6 min., color), a collage of incidents concerning a man carrying a cross. Some people will be deeply offended by the film while others will find in it any number of comments about modern man and his religious dilemmas.
7. "Labyrinthe" (Contemporary, 14 min., color), a lone figure in white walks endlessly through a maze, a labyrinthe, the world. Purposely unintelligable sounds mixed with fleeting images create a series of ambiguous comments about man which may intrigue some students and confuse the hell out of others.
8. "Machine" (Pyramid, 10 min., color), an animation of a derby-wearing inventor who at first creates for mankind but ultimately becomes selfish and is destroyed by his own creation.
9. "Neighbors" (Contemporary, 9 min., color), Norman McLaren's powerful statement about man and his seeming inability to get along with his peers. Two neighbors living peacefully side by side finally kill themselves over possession of a flower.
10. "No Reason to Stay" (Contemporary, 28 min., black and white), a biased look at one school drop-out from his point of view. Christopher Wood is bright and charming yet he quites school because he sees no real chance for anything educational in his Canadian high school. Very nasty, unhappily sometimes very accurate.
11. "The Shooting Gallery" (SIM Films, 6 min., color), a uniformed figure fires round after round at a series of targets in a shooting gallery, each of the targets flat and two-dimensional until the final target who refused to act as targets should and momentarily develop a life of their own until they are beaten down by the dictatorial uniformed figure.
12. "Survival" (ACI, 3 min., color), a strangely armored young man drives a VW out into the quiet countryside trying to escape the hectic pollution of modern life.

13. "Toys" (Contemporary, 8 min., color), the widely used short film about children viewing some war toys which come alive.
14. "Two Men and a Wardrobe" (Contemporary, 15 min., black and white), Roman Polanski's allegory about loneliness and love. Two men emerge from the sea carrying a large wardrobe. They roam the city and see virtually all the sins man can commit and finally return to the sea.
15. "The Wall" (Contemporary, 4 min., color), an animated cartoon portraying man's ability to use other men. A man comes to a high wall and waits until another man shows up and batters himself against the wall. The first man is a people-user, a very successful one.
16. "Whose Garden Was This?" (Contemporary, 3 min., color), as the song, "Whose Garden Was This?" is sung, we see a young boy on his tricycle. A contrast is drawn between the polluted land today and the green world of the past.

GETTING INTO SATIRE

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Magic is in the common advertising phrase new. Perfection, in consumer consciousness, is its promise. Satire shares that phrase more powerfully though less explicitly, and therein is its appeal. Newness, not for the sake of novelty so much as for genuine improvement, is the root of satire. And for whom is the coupling of newness-improvement most inately appealing? For those whose way of life manifests that appeal; those who champion change as the catalyst producing the new and, subsequently, the improved; those who seek to make changes motivated by an admirable (though sometimes naive) optimism that the ways of man (and God?) are perfectibel. Certainly such people must include many of the young adults in our schools, the students whom we teach. Could not, therefore, the teaching of satire to such a naturely captive audience be accomplished in ways including the traditional in content and method but also the innovative?

These thoughts were part of my preliminary planning for a unit on satire for twelfth grade academic and non-academic students in the summer of '72 for the Baltimore County (Maryland) school system. The unit, which I titled SATIRE: THE PEN AS SCALPEL, has been implemented now for one year in twenty high schools. Most report success in the approach the unit takes toward satire, mainly the inclusion of various media in addition to print as content for study. This article is a summary of that unit, including descriptions of several activities taken from the unit. Hopefully, you may find something useful.

Satire is essentially criticism of people--individual or societal--motivated consciously or un--by the satirist's optimism that improvement is possible, that man is perfectible. Although satires may range in tone from light to caustic, unless there is at least a ray of hope, we do not have satire, but rather tragic irony. The distinction is indeed fine between two works of literature like Voltaire's CANDIDE and Beckett's WAITING FOR GODOT. Nevertheless, the limited optimism of the otherwise bleak CANDIDE ("We must each cultivate our own garden.") classifies the work as satire; the despair of GODOT is not satire but a dramatization of tragic irony of a Fate which reverses human hopes. It is important for a teacher to have the distinction between satire and tragic irony clearly in mind. Drama critic Walter Kerr clearly points it out by equating satire with the implied author's comment "Stop this nonsense," and equating tragic irony with the implied comment "Stop, all is nonsense."

Students should be helped to see, from their beginning of study of satire, that the purposes of satire include the utilitarian, the practical: the impetus for change for the sake of improvement. All of this is implicit in satire's basic optimism and in its underlying nature as criticism of individuals or society.

At the outset, students should be provided activities to distinguish satiric criticism from other modes of individual-societal criticism which are non-satiric. Newspapers supply ample material for such activities. Given a news story, students can easily contrast the editorial column criticism with satiric treatments of the same news event found in other sections of the paper--satiric columns or political cartoons.

Following this contrastive study, students should perform several high-

interest activities designed to elicit from them a definition of satire. Good for material here are recorded satires, of which there are many which students themselves own and will be eager to supply for class discussion. Particularly appealing to students are those by George Carlin, whose albums young people have made best-sellers because of their satiric relevance to their own young lives. Especially suitable for eliciting a definition of satire is Carlin's TAKE-OFF'S AND PUT-ON'S (RCA-Camden record #CAS-2566), a hilarious "hip" satire on disc-jockeys, commercials, daytime television, newscasts, among others. Several phrases used by Carlin, as well as the title of the album, are current student slang very closely relating to various forms of satire: take-off (parody), put-on, lampoon, put-down, spoof. In addition to a class discussion of such terms contributed by youth to the lexicon of satire, the grammatical significance of the terms should be discussed. All are examples of "functional shift"--i.e., each may function as more than one word class without changing its form; depending on context, each may function as noun, verb, or adjective.

Following a student-derived definition of satire students should be exposed to a gamut of satire. A serious failing of traditional approaches to the teaching of satire is that such approaches are more often than not limited to only one form of satire: literary satire. The purpose of the following activities is to show the myriad forms: verbal and non-verbal, contemporary and non-contemporary. The scope of materials for such activities should include many forms of "popular" satire as well as literary satire: short and feature-length films; current television shows which are either partially or entirely satiric; popular, folk, country, and rock music; satiric songs selected from musical comedy original cast albums (there are many); records by satiric comedians; journalistic satire, including satiric columns and political cartoons; satiric magazines like MAD and NATIONAL LAMPOON; cartoons (still and animated), comic strips and comic books; a miscellany--clothing as satire (e.g., the "studied-ugly" look as youthful anti-establishment criticism), bumper stickers, graffiti, posters, social commentary buttons, etc.

From a study of the many forms of popular satire, including analysis of satiric techniques, students should be able to broaden their initial understanding of satire and arrive at these conclusions:

1. Satire is all around us, not just in books.
2. Satire may be either verbal or non-verbal.
3. Through clothing style and body adornments, as well as body language, a person may literally be a "living, walking satire."

Throughout a unit on satire, the study of tone and consequent mood should receive emphasis: awareness and identification of tone by the reader/viewer/listener necessarily precedes comprehension of the satiric content. Apprehension of tone in written speech (literature) is one of the most difficult literary skills for students to acquire, although those same students are keenly aware of the signification value of tone (or style) in oral speech (conversation) as well as para-linguistic tone--e.g., significance of length of skirt, color and body design of a car, hairstyle, etc. This disparity in ability to perceive tone is explained by degree of difficulty: inferring tone (or style) in everyday situations is primarily an act of the senses and only secondarily an act of the intellect; inferring tone in literature (irony, "high satire", parody) is primarily an act of the intellect. Practicing identification of tone throughout a unit on satire should improve the student's ability to understand and appreciate selections covered, as well as provide students with a valuable linguistic tool for independent understanding of the significance of tone in other kinds of communication.

Graffiti, a neglected form of satire, is recommended for practice in inferring tone because of its brevity, clarity, cleverness, and often relevance to the concerns of young people. Perhaps the teacher could ditto some classic graffiti as material for class analysis. Here are some possibilities followed by some stimulous questions:

1. DEATH IS NATURE'S WAY OF TELLING YOU TO SLOW DOWN.
2. GOD IS DEAD.
   --Nietzsche
   NIETZSCHE IS DEAD.
   --God
   GOD IS ALIVE. GOOD IS DEAD.
3. ANDREW WYETH PAINTS BY NUMBER.
4. MARSHALL McLUHAN IS PRINT-ORIENTED.
5. OLD SOLDIERS NEVER DIE. YOUNG ONES DO.
6. DRAFT BEER, NOT STUDENTS.

Stimulous Questions

1. Which contain word-play, puns?
2. Categorize the examples of graffiti by tone: irreverent, mocking, bemused, sarcastic, flippant, whimsical, etc.
3. Which are parodies? (Of ads, slogans)
4. Often the way in which the graffiti message is written (style and tone) rather than the message itself makes the graffiti clever and memorable. The cleverness of style is usually the result of literary devices used. Locate examples of such devices as irony, rhyme, parallel structure, allusion.

Creative students might enjoy an extension of the above activity on tone. Students select a famous saying and drastically alter the tone by making slight changes in the wording--emphasizing the importance of the relationship between diction and tone.

Examples

1. "Give me liberty or kill me."
2. "Look! Up in the sky! It's a bird! It's a plane! Or else some third possibility as yet unnamed!"
3. "Brevity is the soul of a funny story, or a clever saying or anything of that kind."
4. "The pen is pointier than the sword."
5. "Friends, Romans, Countrymen, Ladies and Gentlemen...."
6. "Wheaties--The Breakfast of Honorable Mentions."
7. "It's a lot better than the things I've done before, and I'm going to a really groovy place." --Sidney Carton

Closely related to tone in satire is irony: an ironic tone is often the satirist's modus operandi. The three common forms of irony--verbal, situational, dramatic--are present in virtually all satire. Voltaire's classic satire CANDIDE is totally based on dramatic irony, e.g., the reader's constant awareness of the constant unawareness of the title character. Students tend to have more difficulty with verbal and situational irony than dramatic.

To help students with verbal irony, having first given them an example of what you would like them to do (below), have students prepare for class analysis a phrase that could be either literal or ironic, depending on context; in add-

ition, the students should provide descriptions of the two contexts--one that would provide an ironic meaning for the phrase; one that would provide a literal meaning.

Example

Phrase: "He's a brain."
Context for Ironic Meaning: The student described just flunked a major test.
Context for Literal Meaning: The student described just received a perfect score on a major test.

Following the above activity, students should widen their understanding of verbal irony by coming to grips with a firm definition of verbal irony. Perhaps they could choose one from those below, or (better) make-up and defend their own, using within their definition saying and meaning.

Definitions for Discussion

1. Verbal irony is saying what you mean and meaning what you say.
2. Verbal irony is not saying what you mean but meaning what you say.
3. Verbal irony is saying what you mean but not meaning what you say.

(and so forth)

Extend the above by pointing out a similarity between verbal irony and lying: misrepresentation of reality. Ask students to point out important differences, then they should make up a sentence and describe a situation in which that sentence would constitute a lie; finally, using the same sentence, describe a situation in which that sentence would constitute verbal irony.

To crystallize student understanding of the relation between satire and both verbal and situational irony, ditto the famous short poem "War is Kind" by Stephen Crane (accessible in many anthologies). Before students read the poem, discuss the title with them as if it were completely literal; then ask students if any meaning other than the literal is possible. Students should then read the poem to determine which meaning--the literal or the ironic--is appropriate. Following the initial reading and the students' discovery of the irony of the title, students should re-read the poem to identify the clues which led to their conclusion that the title is ironic. (The main technique conveying the irony is juxtaposition.) Follow up this activity with an assignment designed to clinch student understanding of verbal and situational irony. Prepare a photo collage on poster paper showing aspects of the un-kindness of war; in large letters print over the photo collage WAR IS KIND. Students will immediately perceive the devastating irony--both verbal and situational. Assign a similar collage to your students. The ironic statement applied to the collage could be a famous maxim, or one of the student's devising.

Tone, the basis for most of the preceding activities relating to perception of satire, has a corollary: mood. Both are inseparable in satire as well as other literary forms. One (tone) is instilled in his work by the satirist to communicate his attitude toward his subject; that tone, rightly perceived, elicits a consequent mood in the reader/listener/viewer of the satire. Having succeeded in identifying tone in various media of satire, students should then be shown the range of moods in satires: from light and cheerful whimsical moods to dark virtual despondency and cynicism.

One sub-category of satire that invariably yields a mood in the reader/viewer/listener of the lighter variety is parody. A good, interesting activity to illustrate the playful satire of parody is to have students parodize famous authors. Have students volunteer the names of authors with readily identifiable styles and typical contents: Poe, Shakespeare, Faulkner, Dr. Seuss, Chaucer, Hemingway, Whitman, Beckett, etc. Ditto brief excerpts that typify the styles of the authors mentioned by the class and hold a discussion analyzing several of the styles according to specific categories: level of vocabulary, sentence length, syntax, literary devices. The result of the class analysis, in addition to clarifying and deepening student understanding of the elusive concept of literary style, will provide background for the follow-up: a written parody of the style of any famous author of the student's choice. The student should review the components of his author's style, then write a brief parody. So that students will concentrate primarily on style--the main element of parody--provide a framework for the content. Suggested frameworks and examples of parodies are included below.

Frameworks

1. recipe
2. weather report
3. "Dear John" letter
4. commercial
5. sermon
6. political campaign speech
7. marriage proposal
8. Mother Goose rhyme
9. letter of resignation
10. spy message
11. newscast

Examples of Stylistic Parodies

1. Letter of Resignation: Dr. Seuss

This office is a lousy pit
In which I'm sure I'll never fit.
The supervisor's always lit.
The office manager's a twit.
The people here are lacking wit.
Their manners make me throw a snit.
I don't like where I have to sit.
I'm mad enough to want to spit.
I don't like this place a bit.
And that, Dear Boss, is why--I quit.

2. "Dear John" Letter: Edgar Allan Poe

As the marriage was impending, deep
    inside methought of ending,
Ending dear betrothal soon to be naught
    but forgotten lore.
Here, in sad throes of expressing what,
    the while, I'd been repressing,
That I find them quite depressing and thy
    company but a bore.
"'Tis all over now," I whisper. "No more
    passion like before."
I will see thee--nevermore!

All of the above activities on tone and mood are designed to prepare students for understanding of more difficult satires, especially the classic literary satires like Candide. Too often we over-estimate the abilities of high school

seniors and plunge them into such, for them, murky waters as Candide without first teaching them to swim. They either sink or swim. Too many sink. Perhaps some of the approaches described in this article may help you to prepare students for genuine rather than sham understanding of the satires to which they will be exposed. And, according to students who have done some of the activities described in this article, that "Getting into satire" can be both helpful and enjoyable.

HUMOR IN THE COMIC STRIPS: A DIFFERENT BREED

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The funnies aren't just funny. A lot of evidence has been very painstakingly heaped up in recent years to prove that comic strips are quite serious as well as being funny. The art of the comic strip is Serious Art. Nearly scholarly volumes on the subject (and there are more than one or two) often begin with a genealogy that includes Egyptian hieroglyphs, the Bayeux tapestry, Hogarth, and Goya (under the heading of picture narrative), for example David Kunzel's THE EARLY COMIC STRIP: 1450-1826,(Berkley: U of California Press, 1973). And that's undeniably true (under the heading of picture narrative). And serious, But somewhere along the list of "begats" an imp begins to grin--not self-consciously, but mockingly--and soon begins to giggle. The funnies aren't just funny, but if we take them too seriously, we run the risk that the comic spirit that animates them will remind us of our folly by the time-tested tactic of laughing at us. "Picture narrative" is a tumbled up definition that somehow diverts us from the point: the funnies aren't just funny, but we read them because they are. Humor is the category, not art.

With that scarcely phlegmsy excuse, we can admit comic strips to the classroom. Freud says that humor (specifically, a joke) is a source of human pleasure because it's a socially acceptable (and therefore "safe") way to express otherwise pent-up aggressions. There's a butt to every joke. (Freud also said that a cigar is sometimes just a cigar, phallic symbols notwithstanding; he's right there, too. Whatever is laughed at is, in some way, the object of a frustration. Laughter gets us around that frustration temporarily, And forever after, we probably won't take whatever we laughed at quite as seriously: a residual chuckle threatens profundity.

But whatever humor is, it's meaning for us is lodged in the mechanism: what makes something funny reveals the meaning of the encounter. To take a classical example: the essence of the humor in Cervantes' DON QUIXOTE lies in the benighted Don's impractical deeds of derring-do that ignore the gulf between the ideal and the real in the application of the ideal to real life. That's what makes Don Quixote ridiculous, laughable. In identifying the nature of the humor in the book, we identify the issues with which the work deals: the value of behaving as if the ideal were possible is ennoblement, and the problem that the novel wrestles with is how to reconcile noble idealism with factual reality. Don Quixote eventually learns to be more realistic and hence more practical and less laughable in pursuing the vision of his impossible dream. At the same time, the prosaically practical Sancho Panza achieves an ennobling vision of the world by partaking of some of the Don's idealism. The novel does not solve the problem in so many words, but the thing that animates the book--the humorous situation of the anachronistic knight--etches the issues in clear outline. In the classroom, that clear outline is the framework for fruitful discussion. The study of comic strips provides an exercise in the same method.

Anyone who reads the comic page of his daily newspaper will quickly raise the demure that not all comic strips are humorous. Some are quite serious indeed--the "adventure" or "continuity" comic strips. The don't tell a joke; they tell a story: instead of ending with a punchline everyday, they carry their tales forward from day to day, employing, with varying degrees of sophistication, that hoary suspense mechanism, the cliff-hanger ending. STEVE CANYON and MARY WORTH are serious comic strips. But comic strips didn't set out to tell serious stories.

In this country, the predecessor of today's comic strip was the humorous drawing--an illustration in a single "frame" or "panel"--that appeared first in newspapers (as an editorial cartoon) and then in the pages of America's nineteenth century humor magazines, PUCK (started in 1877), JUDGE (1881), and LIFE (1883). Towards the end of the century, great metropolitan newspapers battled for readers, and, in the attempt to attract readers and build circulation, they began publishing extravagant Sunday supplements. The first comic strips appeared in these--again, not as strips but as humorous drawings. At first, words, when used, appeared under the pictures, not within them. And the first use of pictures in sequential frames was rare until Rudolph Dirks made it a regular practice in his KATZENJAMMER KIDS. By the turn of the century, the combination of elements that constitutes the comic strip form had been perfected by a trio of founding fathers, each perfecting some aspect of the form: James Swinnerton in THE LITTLE BEARS AND TIGERS, beginning in 1892; Richard F. Outcault in YELLOW KID, 1896; and Dirks in KATZENJAMMER KIDS, 1897. When Frederick Opper's HAPPY HOOLIGAN appeared in 1899, the comic strip had taken its definitive form: Opper's strip summed up all the previous experimentation and combined all the basic elements from its start. And the comic strip made the transition from Sunday supplements to the newspaper's daily pages during the new century's first decade, beginning in 1907 with Conway "Bud" Fisher's MUTT AND JEFF.

For the first twenty years of their history, American comic strips were almost exclusively humorous, and it wasn't until the 1930's that the serious strip appeared in any significant number. Such early strips as HAIRBREDTH HARRY (1906) and DESPERATE DESMOND (1910) began the tradition of carrying a story forward from day to day by means of an outrageously suspenseful cliff-hanger ending. But these strips, with their heroes' exaggerated predicaments and unrealistic resolutions of them, burlesqued the life of adventure rather than taking it seriously. The great potential of the mechanism of suspense that these strips initiated was not fully exploited until the thirties, when "illustrators" invaded the comic pages. The realistic artwork and story of such strips as Hal Foster's TARZAN (1929), Alex Raymond's FLASH GORDON (1934), Noel Sickles' SCORCHY SMITH (1930), and, later, Milton Caniff's TERRY AND THE PIRATES (1934), would make the suspense keener by making it seem more real.

When comic strips began to be drawn by illustrators (as opposed to "cartoonists"), a new variable was introduced into the definition by which comic strips are identified and, ultimately, evaluated. The narrative could be humorous or serious, and the drawing could now be either "comic" or realistic. With the latter, the standard was faithfulness to reality, to nature--a standard which, hereto fore, had not plagued the comic strip artist. Now, however, if he chose to render his story in realistic terms, his work could be faulted if it fell short of fidelity. The illustrator opened new vistas to the comic strip. Such strips as ORPHAN ANNIE (1924) and WASH TUBBS (1924; the strip form which today's CAPTAIN EASY evolved)had told stories of exotic adventures in far-away places, but now a strip could lend credulity to the tales with the authority of realistic artwork. (But the illustrator, of necessity, could never create a character like Snoopy in PEANUTS.)

The advent of the realistically illustrated adventure strip is the source of the confusion about comic strips that leads to definitions like "picture narrative." But the essence of comic strip art--to entertain--derives from its originally humorous intent, and any definition that ignores this fundamental fact is likely to lodge the comic strip with strange bedfellows indeed. (Even the "soap opera strips" like MARY WORTH, REX MORGAN, M.D., ON STAGE, and THE HEART OF JULIET JONES trace their lineage to humor--from ORPHAN ANNIE TO DESPERATE DESMOND.) when it comes to defining the nature of the comic strip, a further

difficulty arises from the fact that comic strips are both verbal and pictorial and cannot therefore be classed with either literature or art. A working definition of the comic strip is likely to be clumsy but is is nonetheless essential. By more or less common consent, a comic strip consists of the following elements: (1) a narrative (originally humorous but now sometimes serious) told by a sequence of pictures (called "frames" or "panels"), (2) a continuing character or cast of characters, and (3) text or dialog included within the pictures (customarily in the form of "speech balloons" issuing from the characters' mouths). It is a narrative of words and pictures, both verbal and graphic, in which neither words nor pictures are quite satisfactory alone without the other. (A few strips, like Carl Anderson's HENRY, are purely "picture narrative" and tell their stories without words.)

From this definition, we can draw up one tentative criterion for evaluation: in the usual situation, in which both words and pictures are used, a measure of a comic strip's excellence is the extent to which the sense of the words is dependent upon the pictures and vice versa. In the B.C. strip printed below, neither the words nor the pictures make any independent sense; they are mutually dependent.

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In a humorous comic strip, sometimes the words carry more than their share of the burden in making the strip's point. Another B.C. strip we don't need to print: its humor is almost entirely verbal, like the ordinary joke.

First speaker: "Hey, waiter, there's a fly in my soup."

Second speaker: "There can't be--I used them all in the raisin bread."

The addition of pictures makes the joke more satisfying, but the pictures are not essential. Consequently, our second example is, strictly speaking, less a comic strip than the first.

The humor in Bud Blake's TIGER is often purely verbal--that is, not essentially dependent on the pictures that accompany the words. Evenso, the pictures (of round, cuddly children) serve (as in PEANUTS) to establish the setting for the verbal exchanges--a setting without which the essentially verbal humor is not quite as satisfying. Both Blake's strip and Art Sansom's BORN LOSER are highly effective graphic creations, using spots of solid black and simple line-work in contrast to large white expanses--an eye-catching technique that serves each strip well on the competitive comic page. In Sansom's strip, the verbal and the graphic are almost always mutually dependent in creating the day's gag; the strip's humor is frequently highly inferential, as in this example.

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THE BORN LOSER by Art Sansom

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The critical measure I mentioned above can only be a tentative criterion for evaluating. Many excellent comic strips do not always meet it; their excellence derives from other aspects of the art form. In the history of comic strips, individual strips have acquired their reputations of excellence on the basis of the author's ability to excell in any one or more of several components of the art form: the gag, the suspenseful ending, the story inself, the artwork, or the dialog. The history of the art form is marked by the "great" strips whose authors brought one or another of the ingredients of the comic strip to a higher point of excellence, or development, than had been achieved up to that time. The great strips thus establish standards against which the accomplishments of the newer strips must be measured.

Story-telling strips do well indeed when they equal the high standards of the past in plot and picture; most of them, for the past twenty years, have done that. A few have added new dimensions to the tradition of the story-telling strip by treating realistically controversial social issues (in the REX MORGAN, M.D. of the fifties, for example, leprosy, drugs, and mental illness). But the artistic and narrative standards of Foster, Raymond, and Caniff being what they are, the gag strip, not the continuity strip, has offered the most fertile opportunity for significant innovation in recent years--significant enough to

establish new standards, even new traditions in the comic strip art form. Two such great strips of the present are POGO and PEANUTS.

Walt Kelly had a difficult time finding a market for his "animal strip" in the late forties. At first Pogo's regualr appearance was confined to comic books; then, in 1948 when Kelly became art editor of PM newspaper, POGO appeared daily in its pages until PM folded a short time later. Finally, in 1949, POGO was syndicated, bringing about national distribution, and during the 1952 national election year, POGO rose to public prominence when Kelly ran the 'possum for President.

POGO is one of that difficult hybrid genre among comic strips, the gag strip that carries its story forward from day to day. In setting or situation, it is an "animal strip." But in Kelly's hands, this combination reaches above and beyond the animal strip tradition (as continued today in such strips as BUGS BUNNY and DONALD DUCK). At its core, Kelly's strip is a reincarnation of vaudeville, and its routines are often laced with humor that derives from slap-stick. To that, Kelly has added the remarkably fanciful and inventive language of his characters--a "southern fried" dialect that lends itself readily to his characters' propensity to take things literally and that permits a shameless delight in puns. This is funny enough in itself, but Kelly's humor is honed to a satirical cutting edge. The double meaning of the puns often has a social or political implication, and the vaudeville routines frequently look suspiciously like animals imitating people high in government. Kelly underscores his satirical intent with caricature: his animals have plastic features that seem to change before our very eyes until they resemble those at whom the point of satire is directed. One consequence of this technique is that the verbal and the graphic, the word and the picture, are perfectly, inseparably, wedded--a supreme achievement in the art of the comic strip. And all of this satiric action takes place seemingly without the characters themselves being aware of it: the graphic portrayal of these denizens of the swamp as soft, plastic, and harmless joins the vaudevillean strain of the strip to proclaim the essential innocence of the characters, who go about their business, playing at being people, without being conscious of the larger, satiric implications of their acts.

The result is a tour de force: humor at each of two levels--one vaudevillean, the other satirical. At times, the story takes on an allegorical cast; at times, the whimsical innocence of the characters emerges in poignant social commentary. And part of the enjoyment we experience is a consquence of the pleasure we feel when our frustrated anger about some governmental gaff finds expression behind the screen of innocence in Kelly's strip: whenever a seemingly "unassailable" potentate is brought to account by ridicule in the strip, it is at the hands of Kelly's animals whose hearts are pure, whose innocence protects them (and us, who join them in the satiric attack) from reprisal. Its animals and its fanciful language, its seeming innocence coupled to pointed commentary, are reminiscent of KRAZY KAT, that lyric comic strip whose paean to love in the twenties and thirities has never been imitated. But Kelly's strip is highly individual, the product of an impressive array of talents, a distinctly original combination of a wide variety of the elements to be found in comic strip art as a whole. Kelly's work--like George Herriman's KRAZY KAT and Crockett Johnson's BARNABY--is inimitable. POGO opened to a greater extent than ever the possibilities for political and social satire in comic strips. And many strips since POGO'S beginning (LI'L ABNER, for instance) have made their satirical barbs more pointed. But even the satire of ANIMAL CRACKERS is but a pale reminder of Kelly's "animal strip." ANIMAL CRACKERS, in fact, owes more to PEANUTS than to POGO.

Charles Schulz's PEANUTS has served as a model for a great variety of new strips. The "show" in PEANUTS, albeit brilliant, is less a dazzling and highly individual combination of ingredients than in POGO. For one thing, its surface elements, its most apparent features, lend themselves easily to adaptation by others, who shape those elements into an expression of their own talents. And this, without risking the charge of imitation: there have, after all, always been gag strips about kids, but there have been few satirical continuity/gag strips featuring animals who speak a curiously comic Southern dialect. Moreover, there are aspects of the humor in PEANUTS that are not peculiar to a strip about kids and that, therefore, can be handily applied to a host of other situations. In effect, PEANUTS has been more successful in establishing new standards--and thereby in creating aspects of a new tradition in the art form--than has POGO because PEANUTS is more serviceable as a model upon which new strips can be patterned.

The deceptively simple artistic treatment of PEANUTS began, once the strip became popular, to set a new fashion for gag strips. Gag strips had always been drawn in the comic rather than the illustrative manner, but even comic characters bore more resemblance to real people than does Charlie Brown. Since PEANUTS, a number of gag strips have adopted a style of artwork that in its stylized simplicity appears crude. The simplicity is deceptive because, although simple, it permits a flexibility in the rendering of characters' expressions that had been impossible before. The exaggeration now possible gives a new dimension to the humor of the gag strip.

The humor of PEANUTS also set new standards. From its beginning in the early fifties, the strip appeared quite simply to be about children who spoke in a remarkable adult way. The humor arose from the dichotomy between the speakers and what they said, between the graphic and the verbal presentation. This mechanism could be modified in a number of ways. Each daily strip established its characters in a childhood situation for two or three frames, then concluded with a punchline that supplied an adult interpretation or response to the situation. The punchline might be in psychological, sociological, or philosophical terms, or it might consist of an unusual application of a cant adult expression. A simple reversal of the situation (children expressing adult concerns for two or three frames, then responding childishly, as in the second strip printed below) offered a variation that admitted of every possibility present in the first arrangement.

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To this, Schulz brought a unique cast of characters, each with a distinct personality trait or quirk that offered additional possibilities for variation on the initial themes. A given situation--say, Linus getting ready to leave for summer camp--can be presented for several days, and on each day, a different character reacts to the situation in his own individualistic way. This method, in turn, lends itself to the creation of "set pieces"--kicking a football, playing baseball, being unpopular--which can be repeated with endless variations.

This kind of presentation produces a peculiar kind of continuity in the strip, and it also serves to re-establish again and again in the reader's mind the personalities of the characters. Out of this emerges another distinctive feature of the strip--the running gag. A particular situation, an individual personality trait, or a characteristic response acquires the status of punchline humor in itself and can be repeatedly introduced in different settings or situations. To the casual reader of PEANUTS, Charlie Brown's remarking, "Good grief" at the end of a strip is not terribly funny; but for regular readers of the strip, that simple remark has taken on a significance of enormously humorous proportions. The running gag is hardly a new invention with Schulz, but he stretched it further than most comic strip artists had done previously.

While the essential element of the strip's humor arises from the dichotomy between the speakers and what they speak, between the world of children and than of adults, the charm of PEANUTS and its greatness lies not in its pointing to the difference between adults and children, but in its emphasizing the similarity. Charlie Brown and his friends may sound precocious, but the strip nonetheless preserves the innocence, the dreams, and the aspirations as well as the trials of childhood. The effect of the combination is that those childhood aspirations and trials do not appear much different from our own. We escape from our frustrations momentarily when Charlie Brown shares them with us. But PEANUTS makes childhood universal without making it adult--as does MISS PEACH, for example, in which the precocious kids sometimes sound as cynical as we are led to believe all adults become.

Snoopy, Charlie's beagle, has risen to increasing prominence in the strip over the past few years. The humor here springs from the dog's preoccupation with pursuits normally followed by humans; again, a dichotomy is at the core of the mechanism. And, again, it is the dichotomy of the non-sequitor: from the evidence presented to our eyes (a dog), it does not follow that we will be witnessing activity usually associated with humans (flying an airplane, writing a novel).

Humor arising from a dichotomy, or "non-sequitor humor," is another aspect of PEANUTS that set a comic strip fashion. Or, if it did not set the fashion (a debatable point since the "sick jokes" and elephant jokes" of the fifties arise from the same comic device), it was at least the first strip to capture and capitalize on a mode of humorous thinking then "in the air." Two other new strips that have at their core some adaption of the principles of non-sequitor humor are B.C. and TUMBLEWEEDS. In each strip, as in PEANUTS, the adaptation is original, inventive, and highly individual, and in each strip, the reader finds again the devices and techniques made familiar to him in PEANUTS--artwork deceptively simple, personality traits sharpened nearly to the point of eccentricity, repetition of set prices, the running gag, animals with human aspirations.

In Johnny Hart's B.C. (which began in 1958), the comedy springs from our recognition of a discrepancy between the setting of the strip and the concerns of its characters. The setting is prehistoric; the concerns, the preoccupations, are ours, twentieth century. Hence, even in this unlikely setting, we are delightfully surprised to discover--ourselves. But with a difference. Man, as always, is the inventor, the discoverer. And there is a childlike (and therefore entirely human) delight in discovery, invention, novelty. But an invention lands in the world of B.C. full-blown, without having evolved from a need. Like children, the prehistoric characters in B.C. fasten on some new device without fully understanding its function or the principles upon which its operation rests. The railroad train in our example is typical. The result is that newly discovered devices are not put to their proper use: they remain novelties, oddities, things that fit into our world, but not quite into theirs.

In TUMBLEWEEDS, Tom K. Ryan builds up the ideal of the Old West and then punches holes in it. The discrepancy or dichotomy is between the myth of the Old West and its reality. Ryan inflates the speech of his characters, but the facts of like deflate them. The dialog abounds in the cliches and doggerel mythology of the dime-novel Western, but reality is seldom as highflown as the prose. Tumbleweeds' steed is not the noble cliche of yesterday's Roy Rogers movie: he's a moth-eaten army surplus cayuse, and he can never quite live up to the expectations of his master who celebrates in his mind's eye the wild and wooly West of Hollywood, not fact. And the fact is that his horse Epic can never jump across those gulleys that yawn like chasms before him. Tumbleweeds, despite his aspirations, must live in this world, not in his dreams.

On every hand, expectations built on the Old West of myth and legend are disappointed. The sheriff can capture the town hoodlum, but can't lock him up in jail; the judge is blind to justice; the heroine is not a modestly blushing shy young desert blossom--she's painfully plain and aggressively desperate to catch a man. Not even the Indians live up to our Hollywood stereotype expectations: hardly savages, they must go to school and take evening classes in the theory and practice of bloodthirsty warfare.

Even if our expectations are doomed to disappointment, the lesson of the strip is not bleak. Tumbleweeds dreams may be doomed to disappointment, but there is no bitter disillusionment here--only a remarkable resilience. The characters turn quickly from their fancies to the facts and embrace reality. Hildegarde wants Tumbleweeds as her husband, but, in the last analysis, any man will do. The realities do not crush these pint-sized dreamers; nor do they quite wake them up.

The humor in these new strips is more sophisticated than comic strip comedy

has been in the past. The humor of BLONDIE was, and is, humor appropriate to the setting in which the characters are developed and appropriate to the characters themselves. The success of the punchline does not rest on our ability to recognize a dichotomy or discrepancy between characters and setting, dialog and action. The humor of BUGS BUNNY or of DONALD DUCK does not spring from their being animals behaving like humans as it does with Snoopy in PEANUTS. Nor, in these two strips, does the comedy come from the animals behaving like animals as it sometimes does in POGO or in ANIMAL CRACKERS. The humor in the strips of this new tradition--POGO, PEANUTS, B.C., THE WIZARD OF ID, TUMBLEWEEDS, ANIMAL CRACKERS, to name a few--is more sophisticated because it depends on our recognizing something that is only implicit in the strip. We laugh at B.C. because we are shown childlike men, men just beginning to be men, trying out civilization, and we see what they do not: that, like a suit that's too large, civilization doesn't quite fit. We laugh at TUMBLEWEEDS much of the time because we recognize that the real Old West was quite different from the West Tumbleweeds tries to reenact. If we didn't know that trains run on round wheels along smooth rails, Thor's choo-choo wouldn't appear funny to us at all. If we didn't know that most cowboys' horses don't jump wide chasms in a single bound, Tumbleweeds' deflation would be tragic instead of comic. But we do know these things and upon that knowledge the humor of these strips is built.

The humor of dichotomy--because it points to a discrepancy, a non-sequitor--is inevitably sobering. In TUMBLEWEEDS, for example, it isn't just the Old West that the characters try to create with their language, and it isn't just the Old West that can't live up to its poetry. Man hovers between the lines here, and he is a bit short of his vision of himself too. Just as he is in B.C. and in POGO.

The same method of analysis here used with comic strips--that is, beginning with a discussion of what makes a given work humorous--can be applied to any work essentially humorous. And since man is the subject (or, perhaps, the object--the butt) of such "jokes," the resultant effort is likely to lead towards a calmer, more dispassionate but more humane assessment of the human condition. Divorced for a moment from our customary sense of self-importance in which the planets in their paths spin around our personal centers, we can see the whole of which we are only parts. And if we are lucky--if we have a sense of humor--we will laugh. With laughter, man rises above his troubles. A sense of humor (I've often thought--perhaps because I read it somewhere) is the spark of divinity in man: it enables him to rise above himself.

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MORE ON THE SUBJECT OF COMICS

Any teacher who introduces the study of comics to his classroom risks plunging himself into a maelstrom of popular culture about which his students know more than he. (True about a lot of other things, too, but doubtless moreso about comics.) Comic books, for example, are enjoying a revival of interest among teenagers unequalled since the late forties and early fifties. A host of "fanzines"--everything from mimeographed sheets to lithographed picture books--are written (often with an enthusiasm that winks at the facts) and read by a surprisingly large audience. One publication, THE BUYER'S GUIDE FOR COMIC FANDOM, does little more than run adds listing comic books for sale and reaches nearly 6,000 paid subscribers twice a month. Another similar publication claims a circulation of 18,000 monthly. (A copy of ACTION COMICS #1, June 1938, containing the first comic book appearance of Superman, recently sold for $1,800; apparently not all fans are teenagers.) The adventures of such comic book superheroes as

Iron Man, Spider-man, Captain America, and Batman probably fall more into the epic literary tradition than the humorous, but looking at a comic strip may well lead to looking at a comic book. And comic books look different these days: the superheroes are plagued with psychological problems that reflect the moral miasma of the times. The comic book industry grew out of comic strips; comic books at first merely reprinted newspaper daily comic strips. Two histories of comic books are available: ALL IN COLOR FOR A DIME, a collection of essays edited by Dick Lupoff and Don Thompson (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, 1970; also available in paperback), and Jim Steranko's HISTORY OF THE COMICS (Reading, Pennsylvania: Supergraphics Publications, Volume 1, 1970; Volume 2, 1972; both paperback and available through remainder houses like Marboro and Publisher's Central Bureau). Steranko, formerly a comic book artist, has compiled a great deal of anecdotal and biographical material in his two volumes (more of which are on the way), identifying for the first time the erstwhile anonymous artists of "the Golden Age of Comics"; both volumes are well furnished with illustrations.

Teenagers are less likely to be familiar with the history of comic strips (even as sketchy a history as is included in this article). Coulton Waugh, himself a cartoonist for many years (DICKIE DARE), wrote the first real history of the medium, and it's still the best--full of technical insight, anecdote, explanation, understanding, and affection; THE COMICS (NY: Macmillan, 1947). Without Waugh's unique advantage, Stephen Becker wrote what is easily the next best history: COMIC ART IN AMERICA (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1959). Both well illustrated and full of fact. Another, more recent publication, 75 YEARS OF THE COMICS (Boston: Boston Book and Art, 1971), is useful chiefly because of the completeness of its pictorial record; an introduction by Maurice Horn considers and describes at length the nature of comic strip art. Horn participated in an earlier venture with Pierre Couperie--A HISTORY OF THE COMICS (NY: Crown, 1968), a paperback available through remainder houses. Though it sometimes takes itself a little too seriously, it is a profusely illustrated, exhaustive examination of the comics as artistic, literary, social, and cultural phenomenon and is provactive with ideas potentially useful in the classroom.

TEACHING SHAKESPEARIAN COMEDY

Arthur Colby, Arizona State University

Occasional inquiries of students in my Shakespeare classes reveal the rather depressing fact that, with very few exceptions apparently, the menu of Shakespearian fare served up to high school English classes has changed little, if at all, since my own high school days (sometime before the Flood, if memory serves). The principal offerings are drawn from those plays written after about 1599, usually MACBETH, HAMLET, JULIUS CAESAR, and OTHELLO, with the almost invariable addition of the early ROMEO AND JULIET. Not really too bad, perhaps, but if it's going to be tragedy, why not LEAR, probably the grandest expression of the idea of caritas in English dramatic literature (at least), or CORIOLANUS, the timely, cautionary account of a man humbled and destroyed by his mad delusion that the interests of the State must take precedence over even his residual human feelings for his mother, wife, and child? Moreover, those plays that are offered are too often, the evidence unhappily suggests, both misread and mistaught. ROMEO AND JULIET, a case in point, would seem too frequently to be misrepresented by a bowdlerized, hopelessly sentimentalized version that completely ignores the pervasive atmosphere of sex and violence in the play (easily the bawdiest of Shakespeare's works), that excises or overlooks the cheerful and thematically important obscenities of Mercutio and the Nurse, and that sees Romeo's lovely speeches in the Balcony Scene as declarations of his chaste and innocent love for Juliet instead of what they are, an explicit effort to convince Juliet that she should go to bed with him. OTHELLO is presented as the "simple" account of a man undone by the "tragic flaw" of jealousy (perhaps the least noble attribute one could imagine the mature Shakespeare investing a tragic protagonist with), instead of the chilling depiction of innocence (which is not the same thing as virtue, of course) perverted by worldly evil. Macbeth is seen as a contemptibly spineless fool hustled into the perpetration of unspeakable crimes by a trio of bearded crones and a discourageingly bitchy wife, while JULIUS CAESAR purports to celebrate, in the person of Brutus, the patriotic fervor of a kind of Roman Nathan Hale, instead of revealing the appalling intellectual poverty of a man who confuses love of country with virtue and, in his confusion, is able to delude himself into thinking of a bloody assassination as a ritual sacrifice. What is done to and with HAMLET is perhaps best left undiscussed. And so it goes.

However, I digress. The topic announced by the title of this paper is "Teaching Shakespearian Comedy." Perhaps I should have titled the paper "Teaching Shakespeare's Comedies," but this would have been both misleading and unnecessarily restrictive. There is, of course, much that is laughter-provoking even in the plays I have already mentioned. It is a critical commonplace to observe that the movement of much of ROMEO AND JULIET'S first three acts is that of comedy, and there is much that is irresistibly funny in, for example, Romeo's absurd adolescent love-sickness, in the Nurse's loquacious and singleminded equation of love with sexual gratification, in old Montague's and old Capulet's impotent sword-rattling, in Mercutio's obscenely mock-cynical put downs of Romeo's romantic pretensions and Tybalt's adolescent machismo. Similarly, there is behind Iago's malevolence much that is more akin to the merry deviltry characteristic of the Vice of earlier English drama than to the conscienceless malignity of the sixteenth-century Machiavel, and the ravings of Desdemona's deceived father, Brabantio, approach at times the comically ineffectual protestations of the senex in the Plautine tradition absorbed by Shakespeare and his predecessors in the grammar schools of sixteenth-century

England. Of the druken Porter's scene in MACBETH little more need be added to the often brilliant discussions of this interlude that have already been written; we laugh as the befuddled retainer imagines himself "the porter of hell gate," and the laughter chills our very souls.

But I think that, finally, these comic elements in the tragedies offer few problems to the conscientious teacher of Shakespeare. Our critical bags are packed with useful terms that can be invoked to explain away, and even to justify, these laughter-provoking intrusions into the tragic mode that so offended the classical notion of decorum dear both to Ben Jonson and to Dr. Johnson. If Iago's machinations too often provoke our laughter, it is precisely because, faced with the presence of such inexplicable evil, we must either laugh self-protectively or despair. It is because we laugh at Romeo's adolescent posturings, knowing--we think--that eventually he'll grow up, come to his senses, that we can be so deeply affected by his totally senseless, wholly unnecessary death. And yes, laughter provides us with "comic relief" of our distress; one phenomenon that many of us have experienced is that of the sometimes barely restrained hilarity that overcomes the chief mourners after a funeral service is over.

It is not, then, the comedy in the tragedies that we have any real difficulty with; it is the comedies themselves. We sometimes forget, perhaps too conveniently, that Shakespeare wrote nearly twice as many comedies as tragedies or histories. We forget that William Shakespeare, the popular dramatist, was in some ways the Neil Simon of his day (although, given Simon's productivity thus far in his career, rather more prolific than Simon). And yet, with the possible exception of MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM (a comedy, by the way, <u>not</u> written for the popular stage) and MERCHANT OF VENICE (a comedy too often transformed in our teaching of it into a tragedy, because we cannot handle the offenses to our sensibilities inherent in its portrayal of Shylock's comic <u>Jewish</u> villainy), the comedies of Shakespeare are paid far too little attention--at least on the secondary school level. Since it is primarily to those of you who teach Shakespeare to high school students that I address myself, I should like first to consider, briefly, some of the reasons why you may not be teaching Shakespearian comedy and second to suggest some means by which you <u>can</u> teach it.

Some, no doubt, even today find disquieting in the comedies that which so distressed the genteel feelings of the Reverend Bowdler and his spinster sister--their unabashed, unselfconscious, explicit bawdiness. Much of the merry repartee exchanged by Shakespeare's lovers and would-be lovers is specifically sexual in nature; indeed the typical plot of Shakespearian comedy turns on the necessity of young lovers (more often his young men, interesingly enough, rather than his young women) learning to distinguish simple sexual desire (usually only thinly disguised as romantic love-longing) from mature love (the "marriage of true minds" defined in Sonnet 116, perhaps the loveliest of them all). Excise, or ignore, the bawdy, however, and you remove much of what makes the comedies comprehensible. Two related problems (by no means limited to the comedies, of course) are the presence of topical allusions in the dialogue and lexical difficulties arising from words and phrases in the dialogue that have since become archaic or have become changed or altered in meaning. (Portia's "So shines a good deed in a naughty world" sounds faintly ridiculous unless we know that "naughty" had, in Shakespeare's time, the force of "evil"; Malvolio's "The Lady of the Strachy married the yeoman of the wardrobe," on the other hand, has never been definitively explained.) For such matters as these, even the most conservative editor of Shakespeare cannot resist a modest comment, and surely nothing destroys the flow of comedy faster than footnotes. The most easily overcome difficulty with Shakespearian comedy concerns the conventions of the Renaissance theatre generally

and of Shakespearian comedy in particular. The high school student of Shakespeare will have to know about the convention of the impenetrable disguise, for example; he will have to know something of the pastoral conventions that the playwright both adopts and gently mocks in the romantic comedies; he cannot fully appreciate the subtle humor inherent in the Orlando-Rosalind wooing scenes unless he knows what Shakespeare's audience knew: that a boy actor is playing the part of the heroine, Rosalind, who is disguised as a boy, Ganymede, playing the part of a girl, a kind of surrogate Rosalind. And the student must know that when Shakespeare concludes TWELFTH NIGHT by having Feste sing the famous song with its plaintive refrain--"For the rain it raineth every day"--he is reminding us that the dukedom of Illyria, where of course the rain never falls, is only a romantic fiction. But the conventions are easily explained, and a carefully prepared, unpedantic introductory lecture can do the trick.

There remains the play. And here let me recall what I mentioned above and which we too easily and perhaps unwittingly forget: Shakespeare was a popular dramatist; he wrote to entertain the public theatre-goers of his time; he wrote, with a very few exceptions, plays designed to induce these people to part with their money in exchange for tickets ennabling them to see the plays performed by actors, on a stage, in a public theatre. If, as seems to have been the case with TROILUS AND CRESSIDA, the play failed to entertain, then it closed as rapidly and with, perhaps, proportionally as great financial loss to the company as the recent failures of Broadway's "Dude" and "Via Galactica." To put it another way, Shakespeare's comedies, certainly, are not closet drama; they were written to be performed by a versatile and highly talented small company of actors. And here, I suggest, is the key to making the teaching of Shakespearian comedy a viable undertaking; it can be expressed in one word--PERFORMANCE!!

Those of you who saw the recently televised production of Joseph Papp's MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING (and those of you who didn't without valid excuse, probably should have your certification revoked, at least) will know what I mean. Never mind the turn-of-the-century American setting and costumes, the interpolated songs (with Shakesperian lyrics, it should be noted) and dances, the Keystone Kops chase sequence--all of which, of course, only further enhanced the infectiously gay spirit of Shakespeare's original conception and to which only "purists" (read "unimaginative pedants") objected. The important thing--the only thing, really--is that in this production Shakespeare's MUCH ADO came together and came alive in a way no dreary reading of it from the printed page could ever achieve. Moreover, the production fully realized both the spirit and the intent of the play. (Indeed, it was remarkable how very little Shakespeare's text was edited.) Claudio's astounding (but only adolescent, after all) naivete became understandable and forgivable, just as the lovely Hero's mature compassion for Claudio's callow behavior became explicable. Don John's villainy was exposed for what it is, no more than eventually (and obviously) ineffectual plotting analogous to that of the mustachioed villain of Victorian melodrams. And best of all, Beatrice and Benedict emerged as the fully realized, wholly believable human beings that their creator intended them to be; not two romantic youngsters playing at a love game of which they barely understand the meaning, but two young people whose witty, mocking (and yes, bawdy) exchanges serve, with only partial success, to mask the genuine, mature feeling that each has for the other and that both are unwilling to risk degrading by exposure to the potentially giddy incomprehension of those around them. Their mutual declaration in the play's final scene that each loves the other "no more than reason" is at once the play's climax and the playwright's

genially wise assertion of the real difference between romantic pretension and true love. The production was a visual and aural feast, and it proved beyond question the continuing dramatic viability of Shakespearian comedy.

But such spectacular events as this television production of the Papp MUCH ADO are too few, too far between, too much a sometime thing to be put to any kind of routine use by the classroom teacher. Once shown, they disappear into an electronic limbo out of which, unless desperate circumstance warrants, they seldom reappear. What alternatives are there, then? There are several, and their use is restricted only by the limitations of the high school's media resources and by the energy (and ingenuity) of the high school English teacher.

Where money and equipment are more or less readily available, film and video tape are obvious possibilities. Unhappily, there is a distinct dearth of usable, commercially produced films of Shakespeare's comedies. Some are little more than curiosities, of real interest only to the serious historian of the film: D.W. Griffith's 1908 silent version of TAMING OF THE SHREW, for example, or a 1912 silent version of AS YOU LIKE IT. Others might well be of interest to the mature student on teacher, but they are probably too dated to provoke more than derisive laughter from today's high school student: the 1929 Fairbanks-Pickford TAMING comes to mind (with its probably all-time classic screen credit, "additional dialogue by Sam Taylor"); the 1936 AS YOU LIKE IT, with Elizabeth Bergner and Laurence Olivier; and, probably the best of the lot, the 1935 MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, with Mickey Rooney as the Puck and James Cagney as Bottom. Of most recent date, but (if available at all) of probably too great rental cost to be seriously considered by a high school English department are Peter Hall's 1968 MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM, a somewhat controversial production aimed primarily at the American television audience, and the 1966 Taylor-Burton TAMING, a colorful romp of a film that, unfortunately, as does the typical amateur performance of the play, reduces it to the level of farce, portraying Petruchio as the prototypical male chauvinist pig and Kate as the bitchy female who is fianlly bullied into abject submission by her lout of a husband. The play Shakespeare wrote is, of course, considerably more sophisticated than this; his Kate, like his Beatrice, Rosalind, Portia, and the rest, is a young woman, who, in the course of the play's action, partly through her own efforts and partly through the subtle efforts of others, especially the man she loves and who loves her, grows from a somewhat narrowly realized, but spirited, female into a wholly realized, fully liberated person. Something more than farce, this. But the problem remains; there is simply little, if anything, in the list of commercially produced films of Shakespearian comedy that is readily usable in or available to the typical high school English class. (The determined English teacher, however, will not meekly accept this judgment without surveying the entire field of possibilities catalogued in Peter Morris, SHAKESPEARE ON FILM, published by the Canadian Film Institute, 1972.)

If commercially produced Shakespeare films are not readily available or usable, however, then an obvious alternative is to make one's own films or video tapes. This can be far less complicated an undertaking than it might seem, too. There is probably no high school or college dramatic organization, no community theatre group, no privately sponsored theatrical association that can't be counted on to perform a Shakespeare comedy (usually, as in the case of the commercial films, MND, TAMING, AS YOU LIKE IT, or TWELFTH NIGHT once every season or so. It's hard to imagine any such group not being flattered by a request to film or video tape all or portions of its performance. (By all means, get the class out to see the live performance; the film or tape is

for classroom use in subsequent semesters.) A more immediate project, of course, would be to have members of a current class prepare and film (or tape) a scene, or scenes, from the play under discussion in the classroom. The entire class could act as the director, deciding how the scene should be staged and performed to realize most effectively both its intent and its contribution to the movement of the play as a whole. Since the comedies lend themselves to performance in natural outdoor settings and in contemporary dress, the more technical aspects of production--make-up, set-design, and construction, costuming, etc.--could all be dispensed with. And the end result, of course, will be a practical, permanently recorded demonstration of Shakespeare as theatre, one that can be used over and over again as a teaching aid in future classes. A final suggestion for the use of video tape is that it be used for direct recording of the occasional Shakespeare production broadcast by commercial and educational television. This is certainly one way of preserving for future use something like, for example, the Papp MUCH ADO which, as I mentioned above, is by no means certain to be shown ever again on commercial television. But this procedure raises the interesting and perhpas unanswerable question of whether it constitutes a violation of either the letter or the spirit of the current copyright laws. Could the practice be defended as "educational fair use" of copyrighted material, or is it simply and unquestionably illegal? I will not presume to offer an opinion on the matter; let me only point out that it has been done, and the benefit to the classroom teacher of Shakespeare is incalcuable.

The preceding discussion has followed from the presumption that expensive and, in some cases, highly sophisticated equipment is yours for the asking. But in more cases than not, this is simply not the case. What then? In effect, I have already suggested the second broad category of possibility--live performance. No conscientious teacher of Shakespeare will miss the chance to bribe, cajole, or threaten his class into attending whatever local performance of a Shakespeare play, especially if it is one he is teaching or could teach, that may occur during the school year. As with the occasional television or film production, however, such performances are rarely of the right play or at the right time in the term--their occurrence is at best fortuitious and seldom able to be planned for much in advance. The next best thing--and in some ways much more preferable--is the performance of scenes in the actual classroom (or elsewhere, but for the class actually studying the play) either by members of the class itself or by visiting actors from another class (a drama class, perhaps, if your school has an active dramatics program), or from the cast of a school or other local production. How this works, and how effectively, I can best describe from personal experience.

Ideally, of course, one will have students in the class who are also drama students or who have strong interest and experience in drama. In recent semesters I have had a number of theatre majors in my Shakespeare classes at Arizona State University. Most of these students were also taking classes in acting and directing for which they were required to prepare numerous scenes from classical and modern drams. It happened once that a student of mine was, at the same time we were reading TAMING OF THE SHREW, doing a scene from that play for a drama class. He asked me to visit the class when he did the scene; I did, and I invited him and other students in the scene (not members of my class) to repeat the scene for the Shakespeare students. I was, frankly, somewhat apprehensive about how my class would react; I wondered if they might not think the playing only "cutesy." But my apprehension was ill-founded. The scene performed was excerpted from II.i, where Petruchio first presents himself to Kate and informs her that he will marry her and tame her. The actors played the scene very broadly, more for laughs than for subtleties of characterization, yet they managed to suggest that Kate

is much more evenly matched with Petruchio in the battle of wits than is sometimes thought. Not surprisingly, the scene was played to a background of almost unbroken laughter from the class. After it was over a spirited discussion ensued, in the course of which both the director and the actors of the scene were made to field questions and criticisms from the class about their interpretation of the scene, about the implications of their interpretation for the play as a whole, about what the individual actors thought about their characters, about the problems they felt existed in the scene and how they tried to overcome them--in short, this was for all concerned a dynamic experience in living theatre. Best of all, after the class was over a number of students commented--rather ingenuously, I thought at the time, although this has since proved to be a common reaction--that they hadn't realized that Shakespearian drama really "worked" in performance. If this is so, then somewhere we have gone badly wrong in our teaching of drama, at least of Shakespeare! In any case, since that first experience I have strongly urged students to undertake the performance of scenes for class, and the performances undertaken have never failed to succeed wonderfully as teaching devices. (Note my emphasis here. Even if the actual playing of the scene goes wrong, perhaps because of poorly thought out interpretation of the whole scene or because of an actor's eccentric of misdirected approach to his character, the discussion that follows will afford an ideal teaching situation.) So my message is simple: get the children out of their chairs and their Shakespeare texts out from under their noses; let them see, and see for themselves through direct involvement with it, that Shakespeare is, first of all, theater; after this, the rest is easy.

One last method of convincing students that Shakespeare wrote drama to be acted is limited in one way but can still be quite successful. There is readily available a rich variety of Shakespeare recordings, often performed by some of the most distinguished actors of the contemporary theatre. A complete listing of all spoken-word records (not limited just to the works of Shakespeare, of course) can be found in the SEMI-ANNUAL COMPANION TO THE MONTHLY SCHWANN record catalogue (available for 75¢ from most good record shops or from W. Schwann, Inc., 137 Newbury St., Boston, Mass. 02216), which no high school English department should be without. In addition to the listing of available recordings, SCHWANN also lists the names and addresses of the companies from which, if necessary, the records can be ordered direct. I have found especially useful the recordings produced for The Shakespeare Recording Society by Caedmon Records, notably the following: THE TEMPEST, with Michael Redgrave as Prospero, Vanessa Redgrave as Ariel, and Hugh Griffith as Caliban; MEASURE FOR MEASURE, with Ralph Richardson as the Duke, John Gielgud as Angelo, and Margaret Leighton as Isabella; and TWELFTH NIGHT, with Siobhan McKenna as Viola, Vanessa Redgrave as Olivia, and Paul Scofield as a wondrously unctuous, absurdly self-important Malvolio. With records, of course, the visual element so important to drama is absent, but with the addition of appropriate music and sound effects, such superb readings as these I've mentioned can quite effectively convey the dramatic excitement of Shakespeare in performance.

Early in this discussion I suggested some reasons why we find Shakespeare's comedies difficult to teach--their often explicitly bawdy dialogue, their sometimes troublesome topicality, their frequently obscure or misleading language. The chief problem--and the most obvious--is that no scene, however sparklingly witty the dialogue, however laughter-provoking the action, can really survive the reduction from fullblooded performance by live actors, even on records, to thin lines of black type on a bleakly white page. The effort of mentally bringing to life the lines of a printed play is simply too great for many of us, and particularly so for our television and film oriented young people. But show your

class a film or run a vido tape, take them to a live performance or create one, play a recording made by some of the finest actors of the British and American stage, and your students who would otherwise gladly leave Shakespeare on the library shelf will discover that, after close to four hundred years, his plays are still smashingly good theatre. And in particular, they'll find that the comedies are funny! In performance, too, topical allusions and obscure language go largely unnoticed and require no distracting explication. The bawdiness (which, by the way, is always healthy, never perverse) takes its place naturally within the larger flow of the drama, and it is neither offensive, embarrassing, or (certainly!) demanding of explanation. (Oddly enough, but truly, even Mrs. Grundy will laugh aloud at lines spoken on a stage that would shock her sensibilites if she read them in a book.) Performance, then, is I think the only way to rescue Shakespeare's comedies from the dust bins of dead literature, but performance that is true to the letter as well as the spirit of the plays. Some teachers of English may try to con their students into showing some interest in Shakespeare by playing recordings of the rock musicals TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA or YOUR OWN THING or even the Rodgers and Hart musical hit THE BOYS FROM SYRACUSE. But the trick is a cheap one and won't fool the dullest student; TWO GENTLEMEN is not Shakespeare's play anymore than YOUR OWN THING is TWELFTH NIGHT, and BOYS FROM SYRACUSE is not COMEDY OF ERRORS. These, and other shows based on Shakespeare's plays are legitimate, entertaining theatre, but if you're going to show your students Shakespearian comedy, show it as he liked it. You'll be surprised, I think, at the results. The play's the thing! Good luck!

AN ELECTIVE IN HUMOR: JOYS AND DILEMMAS

Alicia A. Lira, Miami High School

When our school went to electives for junior and senior English in the spring of 1971, a list of possible semester subjects was given to the students in a preliminary survey. One of the subjects was "Humor." It "went" because many students indicated they would be interested in such a course. Eventually, enough signed up to make two full classes of 35 each for both fall and spring semesters.

This course sounded like it would be great fun to teach, so much against my better judgment and being the kind of teacher that my students can talk into doing almost anything, I volunteered to teach one of the classes.

After Helen Grannis (the other teacher of the course) and I developed a course outline and description, we were off and running. As it turned out it was both the most difficult class I've ever taught, yet also the most fun I've ever had in teaching.

It was fun in the sense that I found many of my students witty and sophisticated. I enjoyed reading the materials they wrote. They came up with surprising insight into American politics in creating their own political cartoons, in spite of the fact that they had difficulty understanding political humor. The comic strips they created often related to or stemmed from their own personal experiences which showed their ability to laugh at themselves and to see humor in their everyday lives. They enjoyed writing limmericks and epitaphs, and using simile and metaphor which showed their aptitude in using literary forms, in spite of the fact that students usually dislike studying or using literary forms. As a matter of fact, one of the "highlights" of the class, as it turned out, was when they wrote epitaphs about the teachers on the faculty. They were hilarious, in good taste and quite appropriate to the teachers' personalities. They talked me into putting them on the faculty lounge bulletin board even though I subsequently got myself into some hot water with one teacher whose epitaph was not to his liking. I told you they could talk me into almost anything.

But, it was also my most difficult teaching. I found it hard for my students to understand that all humor is not "ha-ha, rolling in the aisles" humor. Also, they did not like analyzing any subject matter for the humor in it.

My students found the class interesting and were willing to work if they found the material to be humorous in a way that they were actually laughing out loud. However, if they found they did not laugh out loud or were not able to immediately identify something as "funny," they were disappointed and were unwilling to have anything further to do with the material in question. Political humor and satire (with the exception of MAD paperbacks) were two of the above mentioned facets of humor. Not only were they disappointed and unwilling to work with such material, they became resentful when it was pointed out that not all humor is "laughing-out-loud" humor, but there are various levels of humorous material, some of which are not "funny" at all. Try explaining that sometime!

I thought, perhaps, their failure to understand this point was due to my teaching methods. The second semester I tried different approaches, with the same results. Upon conferring with Mrs. Grannis I found she had experienced the same thing. I did not expect all my students to find all humorous subject matter "funny." I was quite surprised to find they were unwilling to acknowledge that

even though they did not find it "funny," someone else might. It was pointed out that someone must have thought it was funny, or else it wouldn't have been written, filmed, or created. My students would answer: if it wasn't "funny" to them, it couldn't be "funny" to anyone else. Perhaps another teacher, working with different methods, could find this aspect of humor easier to handle.

On the second count, I found my students were unwilling to study any materials to find out why they did (or did not) think it was "funny." If it was funny, that was enough for them. They did not want to know why. If it was not funny, they wanted to know even less. I found this intolerance applied not only to materials which I presented to the class, but materials which were brought to class by the students, and materials written by the students themselves (which were abundantly shared).

Perhaps this intolerance stems from the fact that humor is a highly personal thing. It is an area in which everyone considers himself an expert with the implication that everyone else's opinion is not quite as good or right. (Just like the old saying: "I don't know art, but I know what I like.") This subject matter does lend itself to students believing they have expert opinions. I do not find this objectionable. In fact, I find it desirable. Heaven only knows, we allow them to be experts or authorities in so few things.

A word to the wise about some pitfalls. The subject of "nasty" or "dirty" jokes came up, which I expected. That was no problem. I simply and emphatically stated I would not tolerate off-color, nasty, dirty, or even shady jokes, stories or remarks in any way, shape or form. The rule was: if you couldn't tell it to your mother, you couldn't tell it in class. I would advise taking some kind of position on the subject of "dirty" material, whether you would include it as legitimate humorous material or not. And there are pros and cons. Your position needs to be made clear to the students so they will know what to expect and to prevent any misunderstandings. I choose to leave it out of the course content because I did not want to embarrass any student who might be shy or cause any discomfort to anyone, including myself.

I would also advise to keep assignments as open ended as possible. Because humor is so highly personal and individual, it is necessary to keep assignments open ended to allow much room for interpretation. I avoided strictly "right" or "wrong" answers which would put restrictions on how a student viewed things. I believe this was very desirable and gave the students a fighting chance in discovering what he thought was humorous and what was not.

Upon reflection, I believe it was and is, ill advised to offer high school students a whole semester of "humor," per se. Perhaps my students were justified in their unwillingness to analyze what was funny and what was not. I am not sure. Does man need to know why he laughs? It may be that man only needs to know humor is a human need. Certainly he needs to acknowledge that that need is satisfied in a variety of ways, by a variety of people.

Perhaps it would be more desirable or realistic to offer a semester course entitled "Comedy and Tragedy in Modern Media." The course content offering a balance of laughter and tears as part of the human condition. The combination of these concepts, suggested by my colleague Shirley Sloan, would certainly be compatible as subject matter since much of our humor is based on tragedy or certainly on painful aspects of human nature. The comedies and tragedies of Shakespeare have long been taught together in college classes. Why not the same subject matter related to the things the now generation sees most, the modern media?

Even though I feel an entire semester of humor is unwarranted, I feel this class was most rewarding to teach. It was most gratifying because I spent a great deal of time laughing with my students. How many teachers take time to do that? A curious thing happened in the course of these classes. Laughing with people seems to break down barriers; it seems to make people realize that they are all humans sharing the same kinds of experiences. This happened to me. Wouldn't it be wonderful if that could happen between all students and their teachers? Education would certainly be better off if all teachers would include some form of humor in their classrooms.

APPENDIX A

HUMOR

Course Description:
The study of why we laugh, when we laugh and what makes us laugh. The opportunity to develop an awareness of the power and depth of laughter and humor as the student examines stories, poems and cartoons that range from nonsense to satire. Will include both American and world humor.

Achievement Level:
The entering student should have a basic background in literature, genres of literature, and bacis concepts of literature. He should be willing to explore "why" one laughs as he looks critically at the various works presented in the course.

Course Objectives:
By the end of the course the student should be able to:

1. Recognize at least two literary terms applied to humor in any given work such as prose, poetry, drama, cartoon, or film.
2. Identify the basic reasons why a particular work is funny.
3. Write short jokes, cartoons, and anecdotes.
4. Acquire new words to his vocabulary.
5. Define six literary terms applied to humor.
6. Explore critically at least two works outside classroom assignments, explaining why it is funny and what devices the author has used to make it funny.
7. Present to the class an oral presentation, the length and subject to be predetermined in a teacher-student conference.
8. Do an extensive study on the history and development of a particular type of humor or humor in a specific genre and present it in the form of a paper or presentation.

(Seniors will be expected to do Items #7 and #8 in greater depth and with more quality.)

Course Outline:

I. Why we laugh and what we laugh at.
   A. We laugh at things which are unexpected.
   B. We laugh at things which we feel detached from.
   C. We laugh at things which we feel superior to.
   D. We laugh at things which show weaknesses in a humorous way.

II. Humor in graphic or representational form.
   A. Humor in cartoons
   B. Humor in politics.
   C. Humor in the comic strips.
   D. Humor in jokes.

III. Humor in drama, film and television.
   A. Farce.
   B. Satire.
   C. Slapstick.
   D. Deadpan.
   E. Imitation and parody.
   F. Individual comedians and their styles.

IV. Humor in prose and poetry.
   A. Satire.
   B. Irony.
   C. Malapropism and spoonerisms.
   D. Exaggeration.
   E. Jargon.
   F. Stereotypes.
   G. Puns and idioms.
   H. Epitaphs and limmericks.
   I. Metaphor and simile.

V. Humor in ethnic groups.
   A. Minority group humor.
   B. Sick and black humor.
   C. Stereotyped humor.

Approaches:
Individualized projects will be used as much as possible with the teacher hitting upon certain works with which to teach concepts mentioned in the outline. The student will then be motivated to go out and analyze humorous works and to compose humorous works of their own.

APPENDIX B

The following are samples of open ended assignments for the medium of cartoons and comic strips. The same types of activities can be devised for any of the forms outlined in the course outline and description as the individual teacher sees fit.

1. Review a selection of political cartoons. Have the students bring in the cartoons they find from a variety of sources. After a class discussion a task sheet might be devised using some of the following questions: What do all of these cartoons have in common? What things does the artist use to create satire? What are some of the things satarized in these cartoons?
2. Find political cartoons in the newspaper. Analyze them and identify the current events which they satirize.
3. Analyze and identify a satirical editorial from the newspaper. Give your interpretation of its meaning. Discuss and state the literal meaning and the implied meaning of the editorial; base your decisions on the previous study of connotations and denotations of words.
   (Some lessons on the connotations and denotations of words were presented prior to this assignment.)
4. Draw a cartoon depicting the message you got from the editorial in the above assignment.
5. Design an original political cartoon using events which you think historians will record in later years. Write an analysis of the message you tried to convey in the political cartoon. You will be judged on your ideas, not your artistic ability. You may work with one other person on this item.
6. Write a political editorial satirizing a news story on a national, state or local situation. A news story in any paper would be a good place to start.
7. Pick one comic strip and cut out on a day to day basis. Analyze why it is

funny each day. At the end of 10 days write a summary which will include the following: name of characters, description of their personalities and appearances, what kind of lives they live, jobs, family situations, etc.

8. Write a short paper on the origin of comic strips and their development.
9. Take a comic strip, cross out the dialogue and put in your own.
10. Make up your own comic strip or strips as if they were to appear in a newspaper for five (5) consecutive days. You may work with one or two people of your choice on this item.
11. Pick cartoons from magazines, books, or newspapers and then analyze them. Consider the following questions: What has the cartoonist tried to say? What makes the cartoon humorous or interesting? If it is humorous, what type of humor is used? How have language and drawing contributed to serving that purpose?
12. After reading IT'S FUN TO BE A POLAK list some things that the jokes have in common. Name the alleged characteristics the ethnic group is supposed to have that is being made fun of.
13. Make a list of ethnic groups from which you have heard ethnic humor. Write a joke (original or other wise) that would fit some of your listed ethnic groups. State the alleged characteristic of the group that is being made fun of (or alleged characteristic).

APPENDIX C

The following films are suggested for the study of humor. They are listed according to distributors. Check catalogues for current retail prices.

I. Contemporary Films (McGraw-Hill)

A. Buster Keaton Rides Again
This is a film about how Buster Keaton made another film, The Railroader. Excerpts from his silent slapstick films are shown. b/w 55 min.

B. W.C. Fields Festival
The Fatal Glass of Beer, The Pharmacist and The Barbershop are included to show Field's unique brand of comedy. Hurry Hurry is an excerpt from Never Give A Sucker An Even Break. The Great Chase is a 10 minute excerpt from The Bank Dick. b/w

C. The Golden Age of Comedy
Shows short clips which trace the development of comedy from the silent films of the middle and late twenties. An original live musical score and sound track add to the effect. b/w 55 min.

D. The Plain Man's Guide to Advertising
A lampoon of television commercials by Bob Godfrey. Instructs the average, commercial saturated viewer in the art of devising his own depressing TV commercials. b/w 14 min.

E. When Comedy Was King
Clips on the comedies of the silent era, ranges from 1914 to 1928. Includes Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, Laurel and Hardy, Ben Turpin, Fatty Arbuckle, Wallace Berrey, The Keystone Cops. b/w 81 min.

II. Macmillan Films

A. The Eternal Tramp
This film is a biographical study of the early works of Charlie Chaplin. The narration, spoken by Gloria Swanson, analyzes the craft of Chaplin and offers a study of "The Tramp" character which he made famous. b/w 55 min.

B. The Penny Arcade (Captain Flash vs. The Bat)
A satire alternating straight realistic scenes and stylized comic book

adventures. A cartoonist works as a portrait artist in a penny arcade and lives a fantasy life of adventure through his comic strip, "The Adventures of Captain Flash." b/w 45 min.

C. The Sound of Laughter
Featuring Danny Kaye, Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, Milton Berle, Imogene Coca, and Bert Lahr. Shows the early techniques of talking pictures. Narration by Ed Wynn. b/w 80 min.

III. Films Incorporated

A. The Marx Brothers
A day at the Races (109 min.); A Night at the Opera (83 min.); At the Circus (86 min.); The Big Store (80 min.); Go West (80 min.)
Groucho Marx, Harop Marx and Chico Marx in their most famous films. All filled with a collection of Marx Brothers' best gags, slapstick, songs (Lydia, the Tatooted Lady) and silent comedy routines.

B. Laurel and Hardy
Air Raid Wardens (66 min.); The Bullfighters (62 min.); The Devil's Brother (88 min.); Great Guns (79 min.); Jitterbugs (90 min.); Nothing But Trouble (69 min.)
The best films of Laurel and Hardy at their typical bungling of everything.

C. The Further Perils of Laurel and Hardy
A collection of Laurel and Hardy film clips as they go through their bumbling paces. b/w 99 min.

D. Laurel and Hardy's Laughing Twenties
Pratfalls and pie throwing to tettering atop tall buildings are captured in this compilation of highlights from the comedies of Laurel and Hardy. b/w 91 min.

E. Abbott and Costello
Abbott and Costello in Hollywood (83 min.); Lost in a Harem (89 min.)
Both of these films show the farce that was typical of this comedy team. They get mixed up with starlets, villains and sheiks.

F. Days of Thrills and Laughter
Includes clips of Hollywood's funniest comedies with Douglas Fairbanks, Stan Laurel, Oliver Hardy, Charlie Chaplin, Mack Sennett, Ben Turpin, Ruth Roland and Mabel Normand. b/w 93 min.

G. Four Clowns
Stan Laurel, Oliver Hardy, Charley Chase and Buster Keaton. The art of these four comedians is featured. b/w 97 min.

H. M-G-M's Big Parade of Comedy
Comedy sequences from feature films and shorts before 1947. With Clark Gable, Jean Harlow, William Powell, Carole Lombard, Jimmy Durante and others. b/w 109 min.

TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF COMEDY

Meredith M. Klaus, Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, Michigan

Comedy has traditionally been regarded as a contrast or incongruity--between the higher and lower, the real and the ideal. People have looked to humor and satire either as a means of reforming others or as a means of reconciling themselves to an intractable reality. If tragedy is concerned with man's indomitable struggle against fate, comedy is supposed to talk about human failings in a social context. Yet in our time we have seen the collapse of both tragedy and comedy into black humor, grotesque humor and the theater of the absurd. Humor or tragedy are liable both to be equally depressed about the nature of the human condition and it is frequently difficult to tell one from the other.

Readers or play-goers faced with this difficulty can be helped by a new approach to the make-up of humor, satire and comedy. In looking more closely at them we may find that perhaps both form and purpose have been misunderstood in the past, or have been used in a way that we no longer find applicable. As we look more closely and perceptively into our selves and become aware of conflicting drives and emotional biases, the art forms we develop must reflect that increased awareness. And the image of our culture today, at least that which most presses on our consciousness, is the feeling of fragmentation, of isolation, of everything dissolving into chaos. Our primary need, then, as a culture and as individuals, is for a re-patterning, for an integration lacking in ourselves and our society. Though we have the technology in improved methods of communication to achieve greater integration and interrelation that ever before, we have not yet achieved a social means for implementing that technology. Our ideas of space and time have changed but our cultural images are still formed from our discarded and outdated ideas. Marshall McLuhan describes this situation in UNDERSTANDING MEDIA: "The restructuring of human work and association was shaped by the technique of fragmentation that is the essence of machine technology, the essence of automation technology is the opposite. It is integral and decentralist in depth, just as the machine was fragmentary, centralist and superficial in its patterning of human relationships."

In his altered time-space matrix man begins to gain new insights about his relation to his world which help him to explore that relationship and also his own different functions and capabilities. He must reconcile himself not only to an estranged universe, but to those of his own functions that he has always relegated to a "lower" sphere, not compatible with his "higher" ambitions and activities. If Freud has introduced the concept of the unconscious into our thinking about comedy, it is no less incumbent on later thinkers to provide an integrating principle for conscious and unconscious.

In a world where the coexistence of incompatible ideals has become a necessity, comedy furnishes us with at least one possibility of accomplishing this feat. It is just possible that the comic poet may enable us to reconcile otherwise incompatible standards--resolving the clash between them without denying the validity of either. For it is obvious that comedy has something to do with paradox. Our attention is fixed by a particular proposition because it appears to be incorrect. A mistake? Perhaps. But if we examine the proposition more closely we find it has a sense of correctness of its own--it is at the same time true and untrue, correct and incorrect. And so we laugh.

Because of its mission to reconcile the irreconcilable, comedy becomes concerned with the turning of youth into age, independence into responsibility. But

it is also concerned with turning age into youth, and the total abrogation of responsibility. Thus, in any comic performance, there is a basic polarity that is at once assertion and contradiction. In any comic situation there will be a value established and a questioning of that value. It is the questioning of the asserted value that provides the irreverence of comedy and the coexistence of value and question that provides a sense of tension and incongruity.

We find that in any dramatic comedy the fortunes of the hero, or of a group of people with whom the spectator is in sympathy, beginning more or less unhappily, are transformed into success and happiness in the last scene. In other words, one set of values, the status quo, which denies the hero his happiness, is destroyed, and another set of values, favoring his happiness, established in its place; therefore, presumably, asserting the rightness of the triumphant set of values and the wrongness of the defeated set. The plot has established the victory of one element, the other apparently defeated. Yet the victorious or triumphant values are themselves ultimately questioned.

Thus, though the hero marries a beautiful and wealthy woman, we are not necessarily convinced either of his complete happiness, or the absolute perfection of the world in which that event takes place. Presumably, a play that records the complete defeat of the hero would not be considered comic (though it might be categorized as absurd). Unless we learn to be amused at human suffering, comedy will not be made of total debacle. But, on the other hand, the hero does not gain his victory without some concession to the darker powers of the universe. Thus we have the ambivalence of the comic hero, an ambivalence that is augmented and amplified by the ambivalence of thematic development, the coexistence of contradictory sets of values. This ambivalence of structure gives to comedy an intellectual tang that critics are fond of describing by correlating the dichotomy of comedy/tragedy with thinking/feeling. It is not that we do not feel in a comedy, that our emotions are allowed no action, but that we are forced to think as well, and in an ambivalent fashion. Not that we do not think in a tragedy, but that our thoughts are guided into a single channel and in their singleness of purpose they draw less attention to themselves than do the ambivalent thought processes of comedy.

Comedy is a means of avoiding the codifying, the sorting process that we are forced to do in everyday life and an ability to see life as something which accepts no codification, no idealogical formulation as final. Also, the comic is a proper vehicle for the values of an age that has accepted the scientific attitude toward life; the assertion that a final and all-embracing truth will be reached only after eons of time, if at all; the knowledge that any wholeness of explanation is deceptive. Within this cultural framework, comedy can no longer be regarded simply as a weapon, of defense or of aggression; it has become a tool for finding out the truth of things.

The assertion of a double nature of comedy, both the happy (positive) and the unhappy (negative), inevitably raises the problem of pain in comedy. Basically, it might be said that the tragic pain has not disappeared in comedy, it has simply been accommodated, become part of the comic structure. It is not by denying pain that comedy gains its strength, but by accepting it. It is not by the repression of disagreeable emotions, but by their release, not by an anaesthesia of the heart, but by an acknowledgement of the weaknesses of the heart, not by becoming completely rational but by including the irrational, that comedy attains its final form. And thus it proposes an accommodation of pain, a pain which in actuality cannot be evaded. It is by compromise, by doubt, by reconciliation, that we continue to live. If the transformation of tragedy is essential to life, no less so is the comic compromise.

Generally, we are sympathetic to the comic hero, even though, on occasion, we are faced with a comic hero who is also a buffoon and a bumbler. Our sympathies, however, remain intact. If they did not, his discomfiture in the play would interest us very little. It is because we are sympathetic to him even in the midst of his discomfiture that the comic becomes ambiguous. In the case of the comic hero who is no bumbler, but a skillful manipulator of circumstances, or a breathless recipient of the favors of fortune, there is nevertheless a conditional quality to his final success. Prospero, the arch-manipulator, whispers this comic secret to the audience (or to himself) at the end of the TEMPEST, "And my ending is despair." Comedy or tragedy?

If the happiness at the end of a comedy is not necessarily bright and clear, if it is possible for the protagonist of a comedy to view his own condition with despair, the presence of such pain in comedy must be acknowledged and accounted for. Even when there is not an atmosphere of doubt, when the comic characters do seem to have worked out a satisfactory solution to their problems, the questionable nature of some of the materials they have worked with might well make us question the permanence or the blissfulness of the conclusion. What Falstaff reminds us of is true: "There is a thing called pitch, Touch it and you are defiled." If comedy has been defiled by pitch the purity of its end may well seem questionable, yet, because it has been willing to defile itself with pitch, comedy makes itself a more real, more practical tool to use in deciphering the meaning of existence.

In the history of comic theory, many explanations of comedy have been offered: it has been explained as a weapon, both offensive and defensive; as a medicine, working a beneficial effect on the human physiology; as a social ameliorative, a means to improvement and reform; as a social adhesive, a conservative force used to buttress the status quo; even as a mystical and evanescent spirit that visits us capriciously in a sylph-like form; and finally, and less pretentiously, as a particular aesthetic structure, a juncture or incongruity. Comedy developed as a religious celebration, from the rites and rituals of the Dionysic festivals of ancient Greece. It is part of a "ritual or folk drama, older than literary Comedy, and of a pattern well known to us from other sources." In their beginnings, comedy and satire are both a part of a celebration of life, a spring festival, celebrating both music and dance and "the animal drives that persist even in human nature." Thus comic art forms have in them from the beginning both the highest aspirations of man and his recognition that he is a part of the living natural world, that plant and animal life are part of him.

Traditionally, comedy celebrates the destruction of the old order and the establishment of the new. Yet the constant inversion of comedy makes the audience question both the "goodness" of the new establishment and the "badness" of the old. In a recent television performance, a ballet from the Chinese People's Republic celebrated the triumph of a soldier-hero over a few lurking remnants of evil-capitalism. In a comedy we would both question the idealized heroism of the soldier and have a lurking admiration for the extinct capitalist villains. Another example--from Greek comedy--Aristophanes' THE WASPS: the young, liberal, aristocratic hero succeeds in converting his conservative, narrow-minded, old-fashioned father from his passion for attending trials and serving on juries to his son's own way of life, a constant round of parties and socializing. In the final scene the father enters, roaring drunk and dancing riotously with two naked flure girls. The son wonders if he has had such a good idea after all.

Most of our ideas about comedy are founded firmly not only on Aristotle's explicit judgements on comedy, that the comic concerns the lower part of humanity, but on an implicit Aristotelian logic that demands an absolute definition of identity (everything that is not A is A; that which is A cannot be A). It also ranks those identities in a hierarchical arrangement. Only in this way is it possible to be certain about "lower" and "higher", to regard one kind of people (or things) as better or worse than another. We have become suspicious of hierarchies, or any system that presupposes an elite, and this suspicion is reflected in a good deal of modern comedy. The scenes in Beckett's WAITING FOR GODOT where Pozzo is first master, then dependent, is a reflection of this kind of uncertainty.

An alternative to Aristotelian logic is paradoxical logic, which assumes that A and not-A are not mutually exclusive. Chinese and Indian philosophies develop the paradox as the highest kind of thought. The Chinese philosopher Lao-Tse declared, "Words that are strictly true seem to be paradoxical," and Chuangtzu has said, "That which is one is one. That which is none--one is also one." If the paradox is the highest form of thought, the comic paradox is one means of asserting that the same thing may be both true and not-true.

In the hierarchical view of comedy, the theorist formulates an image of society and of human nature whereby they are segmented, and the segments ranked from lower to higher, laughter being a weapon used against the inferior or as a medicine that purges the lower elements. But today we no longer think of one kind of men as being better than another, we are no longer even sure that reason is the best part of ourselves or the answer to all our problems. In order to talk about comedy in a contemporary frame of reference, it is necessary to alter the terms or the foundation upon which comic theory has rested up to this time. There is no traditional comic theory ready to fit into place, but out of the theoretical proliferation several possible lines of development can be followed. One of these is to base the theory of comedy flatly on the premise that there is no higher or lower, no up or down, nothing that is, in itself, either better or worse. The theorist then looks in another area for his source of comedy. Not that we laugh at something because it is lower than ourselves, but we laugh because the comic presents experience in a new light, showing us relationships of whose existence we had been unaware. The modern insistence is that the world is irrational as well as (or even instead of) rational. We no longer want to rid ourselves of the irrational, the unnatural, the "lower", but by taking account of it, by synthesizing, to learn to accommodate both elements.

The paradoxes of Taoism and Indian philosophy lead to a mystical contemplation of the One, the perfection of unity. The religious overtones should not startle those who can agree with the mythic theorists that comedy had its origins in religious celebration and derives many of its formal qualities from the mythic or religious rites it celebrates. It is enough to allow that the comic paradox may be absorbed and integrated in a larger image by the integrating forces of the comic method.

Hold on to the Tao of old in order to master
the things of the present
From this one may know the primeval beginning
of the universe.

Lao-Tse

If no theory is entirely adequate in explaining comedy, these various ideas may suggest a partial explanation of it. Comedy is not a pedagogic method of instilling morality, because it cannot preach any one single standard of morality.

It is not a tranquilizer, enabling us better to bear the ills of our lot, because it has gone beyond the mere suffering of these ills to an attempt at their reconciliation. It has left the numbing or distracting of the senses far behind. Comedy is not a sugar coating on the bitter pill of reality because it is not itself a sugary substance, but bitter as reality itself.

In the desert
I saw a creature, naked, bestial,
Who, squatting upon the ground,
Held his heart in his hands,
And ate of it,
I said, "Is it good, friend?"
"It is bitter--bitter," he answered:
"But I like it
Because it is bitter,
And because it is my heart."

Stephen Crane

In MY CONFESSION Tolstoy states that "Reason holds no answer to the problem of death: the solution is always the same, as in an equation in which zero equals zero. Whatever ultimate meaning there is is vital, not rational." Perhaps the ultimate meaning of life is vital and not rational. However, it is only by means of some rational construct that meaning or even existence can be realized. They must be given concrete expression in order to be recognized. Yet how can something irrational be expressed in rational terms? Reason holds no answer to the problem of death. But life holds an answer to death because life itself is an answer. In tragedy, though death is nominally victorious, man is somewhat triumphant. He has conquered evil, or injustice, or fate, or even himself, and submits to death as the price he must pay for his triumph. In comedy, however, man enters into combat with death simply by demonstrating vitality, a vitality dependent on the continuance of the tension and ambivalence of the comic form.

GULLIVER TRAVELS

Mary E. Green, Arizona State University

> For, if we take an examination of what is generally understood by happiness as it has respect either to the understanding or the senses, we shall find all its properties and adjuncts will herd under this short definition, that it is a perpetual possession of being well deceived... This is the sublime and refined point of felicity, called the possession of being well deceived; the serene peaceful state of being a fool among knaves.
>
> A TALE OF A TUB, Section IX

Captain Lemuel Gulliver writes that before embarking on his fourth and final voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms he remained at home with his wife and children "in a very happy condition, if I could have learned the lesson of knowing when I was well." It is obvious that on his return from this last voyage to the land of the rational horses Gulliver will never be happy again, barely able to tolerate his wife's presence across the dinner table, snatching whatever comfort he can find in an intolerable existence only in the presence of his stable horses. Certainly Gulliver would have been happier without the fourth voyage. Indeed, by the end of GULLIVER'S TRAVELS the former ship's surgeon is a living monument to maladjustment. And that, perhaps, is why Jonathan Swift's classic voyage of discovery belongs on the high-school reading list: it demands the teenager ask of himself "well adjusted in relation to what?" and it suggests possibilities about the human condition which are not at all pleasant to consider.

I had thought of other ways to open this modest proposal. Since "relevant" appears to be the shibboleth of contemporary education, I might proclaim the relevancy of GULLIVER'S TRAVELS--as black humor, as satire on political corruption a la Watergate, as acid commentary on the less than human by-products of modern science, as anti-war, anti-imperialistic propaganda, or a host of other relevancies. Without doubt the book is all these things. Today's teenager need only open the daily newspaper to parallel Gulliver's travels. Lilliputian politicians persist in their "leaping and creeping" to attain and maintain office. The hairy-brained educators of the Academy of Projectors in Lagado are still devising ways to educate the masses "without the least assistance from genius or study." Lagadoan technocrats are yet inventing new machines that will enable one man to do the work of ten, with remarkable indifference to the quality of the end product or the fate of the nine displaced men. As a matter of fact, today's teenager need not even bother to read the newspaper or turn on the television to appreciate the relevancy of Swift's satire. It is more than likely that all he need do is look about him to realize that in their noisy desperation the mass of men subscribe to the Laputan wisdom of wait and think: there must be a harder way.

An alternate reason for recommending GULLIVER'S TRAVELS is that it's vastly entertaining reading. Imagine the fictive possibilities of a six-foot hero in a land where everyone and everything is scaled one inch to one foot. Then reverse the situation and imagine the difficulty of maintaining one's dignity in a land where a bed is twenty-four feet off the floor and the family cat a leviathan. Imagine a visit to a flying island which fears to use the ultimate weapon against its enemies lest it destroy itself in the process. Travel to a city whose inhabitants live forever. Consider the questions to be answered if the illustrious dead could not only be conjured from their graves but enjoined to tell the truth. Finally, in the best tradition of science fiction imagine a realm governed by non-

human creatures who are completely rational yet devoid of any emotion. Moreover, GULLIVER'S TRAVELS is always good for a laugh--even in the basically tragic fourth book where we see Gulliver proud of his equine gait and his winny-some voice.

Undeniably entertaining as GULLIVER'S TRAVELS is as fiction, I hesitate to recommend the book solely on these grounds; for as Jonathan Swift wrote in a letter to Alexander Pope, "...the chief end I propose to my self in all my labors is to vex the world rather than divert it." (Is it a fitting irony at the expense of the master ironist that in bowdlerized form the TRAVELS masquerades as children's literature?) As for recommending GULLIVER'S TRAVELS for its perennially relevant satiric attack on contemporary "civilization," once again I am reminded of the Swiftian caveat that satire is itself perennially popular because it enables the reader to feel good about himself as he shakes a pharasaical head at the moral and intellectual idiocies of others. Since teenagers generally have not journeyed sufficiently far east of Eden in their own travels, it is difficult to recommend Swift's satire to them with an absolutely clear conscience. The normal adolescent is still happily able to dissociate himself from the follies of the rest of the human race, and Swift is too much the homiletic satirist to wish his readers that kind of detachment.

None of us consistently performs in the manner in which we pride ourselves on performing, and this tragi-comic truism informs GULLIVER'S TRAVELS. Exploiting the satiric device of hyperbolic departure from literal truth, Swift challenges the reader to see himself and his institutions as they are, not as he thinks or wishes them to be. If our happiness, like Gulliver's before the fourth voyage, is dependent upon illusion about the world's more bitter realities, if ignorance is bliss, then, Swift strongly implies, we must choose truth over bliss. He suggests that more often than we would like to think the alternative is not between ignorance and happiness but between truth and happiness. Perhaps this is a premature consideration for the adolescent, but I think not.

Moreover, Swift maintains such a masterful control over his fiction that the reader shares in the substance of Gulliver's discoveries in the fourth book without sharing his violently extravagant reaction. Swift does not ask us to believe that we are literally Yahoos with their gross appetities and their savage desire for baubles. He does ask us to consider that the last thing we should pride ourselves on is our reason and our glorious institutions to distinguish us from the beasts, when too often we use what reason we have to make us systematized Yahoos--Yahoos in spades.

The mythic treatment of knowledge in the fourth book of GULLIVER'S TRAVELS, though climactic, is of course only part of the story. In the voyages to Lilliput and Brobdingnag, Swift uses man's physical stature and endowment as the major satiric ploy to comment on man's moral and intellectual stature. In Lilliput, Gulliver's physical superiority, though at times advantageous to him, is also a source of his embarrassment; and the laughter at Gulliver in this regard is more the laughter of pure comedy than it is elsewhere in the book. It is the Lilliputians whom we laugh at as representative of something else. Their policical corruption, their pride, their ingratitude, their rationalized cruelty are magnified by contrast with their diminutive stature. The same artistic conceit carries into the second book; only here the naive acceptance of evil revealed by Gulliver in his dialogues with the Brobdingnagian king finds it physical analogue in Gulliver's embarrassingly small stature, with the king's moral superiority amplified by his size. The King of Brobdingnag reifies Gulliver's observation that nothing is great or small but by comparison. And behind Gulliver's overt observation lies Swift's implied one: by what standard does

each of us measure his intellectual or moral stature?

The preceding remarks are intended to illustrate why GULLIVER'S TRAVELS is what I call a "teachable" book. A classroom experience with a "teachable" work is pleasurable, of course, but it is also profitable on the very basic level of improving reading skills and helping students mature in their response to the written word and the world about them. Satire demands a sophisticated reader. For example, incredible as it may seem, one still finds those who misread Swift's "Modest Proposal." It's not that their indignation is an unfitting response, but the indignation is misdirected at either Swift or the teacher. With the possible exception of purely personal satire, the satirist levels his attack on what he perceives to be the peculiar follies of his time as they manifest themselves in certain men, ideas, and institutions. Obviously not all attacks on folly are satiric, and equally obvious is that not all satiric attack is motivated by lofty purposes. Satire is difficult to define and often for the less mature reader even more difficult to recognize. As Edward W. Rosenheim, Jr. argues so persuasively in SWIFT AND THE SATIRIST'S ART (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1963), the "central, indispensable element in the satirist's 'method' is the satiric fiction." Satiric fiction can assume a number of forms--exaggeration, metaphor, irony, sarcasm, distortion, fabrication, analogy--in short, almost any kind of departure from literal truth. The essential thing is that the reader recognize the satiric fiction. To do so he must be able to pick up the signals of satire sent by the author, and the inexperienced reader in particular needs help in this regard.

The student must, for example, be prepared to note the satiric hints in the opening chapter of GULLIVER'S TRAVELS, which starts out realistically enough as a narrative of shipwreck and adventure. Writing in the first person, Gulliver briefly recounts his early years at Emanuel College, Cambridge, and the vicissitudes of fortune which eventually lead him to the practice of medicine and a career as a ship's surgeon. But the signals are present, in Gulliver's ingenuous remark that the "bold and dangerous" resolution of the Lilliputians to transport him to their capital city "would not be imitated by any prince in Europe on the like occasion" and in his seemingly gratuitous account of the Lilliputians' ancient temple "polluted some years before by an unnatural murder" (the regicide of Charles I). If satire demands an attentive reader, it also demands one capable of making subtle distinctions. Satire is not always synonymous with irony, in which the intended implication is the opposite of the literal sense of the words, and the student must learn to recognize the distinction when it occurs. A simple-minded illustration from "A Modest Proposal" will demonstrate this point. The <u>persona</u> advocates infant cannibalism as a cure for Ireland's ills; therefore Swift is against this remedy. A remarkable expenditure of creative talent if this is his point!

Swift in the classroom is much more than a vehicle for teaching reading, however. He is an educator, and in GULLIVER'S TRAVELS the reader is "led forth" on a multiplicity of levels. Only a great satirist can transcend the necessary topicality of his art and speak to ages other than his own. The high-school student need not pay undue attention to the particular historic "victims" of Swift's satire. The fact that Flimnap in Lilliput represents Sir Robert Walpole or the Academy of Projectors in Lagado the Royal Society may be briefly noted in passing or more intensively pursued, as student interest dictates. The historical particulars draw Swift's fire because they are manifestations to him of deep-rooted and pervasive human ills. Nor is it necessary that the student share Swift's less than optimistic assumptions and conviction about human nature. It is necessary, however, that the English teacher afford

young people the opportunity to be challenged. Swift offers them this challenge. If Swift's basic assumptions strike the teenager of the 1970's as anachronistic, so much the better. Such an awareness is at least dependent upon an evaluation of one's own assumptions. Television has undoubtedly made today's youth less geographically provincial than preceding generations, but it's questionable that they are less provincial in their view of reality. They still tend to believe that their ideas and attitudes, shaped in the twentieth century, are the only valid ones. Classics such as GULLIVER'S TRAVELS force them to expand their inner space.

It was William Butler Yeats who wrote that Jonathan Swift "sleeps under the greatest epitaph in history." The Latin inscription, written by Swift himself, challenges the onlooker to imitate if he can "one who strove his utmost to champion liberty." The libertatis Swift had in mind was the freeing of man from all forms of self-deception. It's still a highly relevant ideal.

HUMOR IN THE JUNIOR HIGH

Jackie Cronin, Jordan Junior High, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Back in the days of yore when I was an English teacher rather than a librarian as I am now, I came to the realization that there was a humor gap between my high school juniors and me. This notion skulked in my mind for a few years as witticism after wisecrack after quip passed over my students' heads. The suspicion burst into fact when I presented a carefully planned, wildly funny, designed-to-entertain Humor Unit.

It bombed. George Ade, S.J. Perleman, Finley Peter Dunne, et al. were met with blank faces, and at best, polite smiles. As I nearly collapsed from paroxysms of laughter over Thurber's "University Days" my students squirmed uncomfortably. Mark Twain at his caustic best went unheeded. Sensing restiveness, I was still confident with the knowledge that I had a coup de grace, a comprehensive, fascinating, funny article from TIME magazine describing and analyzing black (sick) humor. It was that day's humor (mid-60's), it was gross and macabre (kids are supposed to like those qualities) and penetrating. It featured such luminaries as Lenny Bruce, Mort Sahl and Bruce Jay Friedman. Little student reaction was noted.

Was it them or me? Both, I finally concluded. Differences in our ages, vocabularies, life experiences, and reading backgrounds contributed to the unit's failure. In retrospect I saw that I had neglected the important factor of audience analysis.

The eighth grade English teachers at my present school, Jordan Junior High, experienced a similar setback last year. They, too, spent a great deal of time planning their humor unit which included contractual work in the library. There the students searched for limericks, parodies, puns, hyperbole, understatement, etc. The brightest kids, the best readers absorbed the samples and found other examples of those types of humor. The majority of the students, however, foundered through the assignment. Even after double entendre, innuendo and other sly subtleties of language were explained, our would-be humorists remained nonplused. A joke does lose something in the translation.

This is not to say that all was wasted. The students, teachers, and librarians all felt a bit like Annie Sullivans and Helen Kellers when the teen-age version of "Eureka!" (Sad!) was uttered. A PARODY ANTHOLOGY edited by Carolyn Wells is a scholarly collection; nonetheless, we found Lewis Carroll's

Twinkle, twinkle, little bat!
How I wonder what you're at!

Up above the world you fly,
Like a tea-tray in the sky.

Limericks were loved, hyperbole redefined was mastered. Some of the one and two-liners in BENNET CERF'S TREASURY OF ATROCIOUS PUNS earned their deserved groans. But as the puns became more atrocious and, in general, the wit sharper, the meanings grew more oblique to the readers.

Looking back over the unit the teachers determined that unworldliness and semantics coupled with adult choices of humorous selections hindered students. Because that department is returning to homogeneous grouping, the humor unit will be modified according to the students' ability to read and their mastery

of the language. Hopefully, some of their choices in humor will be included, too.

Another instance of the humor gap between adults and adolescents was revealed when our ninth grade studied TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD. Students were tickled over the presents left in the tree by Boo Radley and giggled delightedly when Jem lost his pants in the fence around the collard patch. Meanwhile, the English teachers were trying to illustrate without much success the irony of the Ladies' Missionary Society worrying about the problems of darkest Africa while in their own town a black man was assumed quilty of raping a white girl.

Michael Fessier's THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED TO ME presented another small teaching obstacle. The story is a fantasy related as though it were fact of a man who is a failure in life. Young readers love the slapstick aspects of the story, but have difficulty understanding the human motivation behind fantasizing.

To be taken literally when employing a figure of speech provides amusement sometimes for teachers. One class was assigned a paragraph-long explication of "A rolling stone gathers no moss." The teacher received just what she requested--several papers stating that when a stone rolls moss does not have the opportunity to grow on it. Once they understand them, the "old-fashioned" phrases are enjoyed by the students. Hearing that the next day they would receive the "50¢ guided tour of the library" caused quite a bit of consternation in one class. Everyone was relieved to learn that library orientation was free.

Some misinterpretations of what teachers say is due to youngsters' underexposure to the intricacies of language. The adolescent sense of humor, at times, though, provides some tough moments for teachers. An entire generation of students may not know how to use correctly "lie" and "lay" and "rise" and "raise" because English teachers no sooner utter the words than the room is full of snickers. "There is No Frigate Like a Book" has not been taught for years by anyone of my acquaintance. A documentary movie available in our school system which deals with teens and their relations with others has the now infamous lines from a mother to her son, "Don't go out without your rubbers. Your father never does." This never fails to bring down the house.

As illustrated above, kids in the junior high age group find sex a wonderful source of humor. It produces titters because of the uncertainties and the newness of it all to the young experience. They are beginning to understand adult humor and add a bit of their own. Whenever there is a group of boys or girls (rarely a mixed group) hovering around one book and chortling merrily, the object of their interest is either a book on human anatomy or the birth process. The library copy of Partridge's A DICTIONARY OF SLANG AND UNCONVENTIONAL ENGLISH is absolutely dog-eared. The older boys claim that PLAYBOY with its cartoons (particularly Annie Fanny) and the party jokes is great and why doesn't the library carry it?

Humor certainly is present in the teen-age world. It isn't always predictable, it varies with the child, and it sometimes provides discomfort for adults, but it's there in all its variations. "Casey at the Bat," a Walt Disney film starring Jerry Colonna is an all-time favorite with our seventh graders. A parody of "Twas the Night Before Christmas" in READ magazine which used Spanish in place of key English words delights those who have studied the language. Students of mythology love to laugh at Hercules' task of cleaning out stables with several years' accumulation of manure.

Last spring I canvassed a segment of our student body in an attempt to discover what in media students found amusing. Their tastes in television were

predictable, but the whole spectrum of situation comedies was covered. Johnny Carson, Dean Martin, Sonny and Cher and George Carlin are their favorite t.v. humorists. Old-time movie comedians, Charlie Chaplin, Groucho Marx, W.C. Fields, and Laurel and Hardy, and books about them are a big fad. Anything with Jerry Lewis, THE WORLD'S GREATEST ATHLETE, WHAT'S UP, DOC? and WHAT DID YOU DO IN THE WAR, DADDY? are a few preferred films. I predict that PAPER MOON will be added to their lists now that it has played in the neighborhood theaters. Radio blooper records, Bill Cosby, Jonathan Winters, Hudson and Landry doing their Ajax Liquor Store and Ajax Airlines routines are popular recordings. Cheech and Chong, a comedy album which makes hay with drugs, war, religion, and sex swept the ninth grade last year.

Comics play a big role in the world of print for young readers. While B.C. and Dennis the Menace entertain some, others are into "head" comics ("Zap," "Yellow Dog," and "Freak Brothers"). The contents of these range from philosophical mind games to reinforcements of the drug culture. Back in the library there is a constant scramble for the Peanuts paperbacks, but the most coveted is the PEANUTS TREASURY, a hardbound compendium. The recent spate of titles featuring American comics in retrospect are big items with boys especially. Best of these are BATMAN, FROM THE 30'S TO THE 70'S, THE CELEBRATED CASES OF DICK TRACY, 1931-1951, and SUPERMAN, FROM THE 30'S TO THE 70'S. John Bailey's GREAT CARTOONS OF THE WORLD SERIES is good as well as CHARLES ADAMS' MOTHER GOOSE and his MY CROWD.

The library staff nearly rides shotgun on our four copies of MAD magazine. Yound and old, boys and girls, urbane and unwordly share a universal passion for this publication. Parody, satire, burlesque and caricature abound. Seeing adults in an uncomplimentary light and viewing contemporary life in an iconoclastic manner produces much laughter for youngsters.

Novels that junior high students find entertaining cover a fascinating latitude. Curious George and Dr. Seuss books are still held dear. Carry-overs from the upper-elementary years are read and re-read. They include HOMER PRICE, AMELIA BEDELIA, CHARLOTTE'S WEB, HARRIET, THE SPY and MISS OSBOREN-THE-MOP.

Family life books such as Jean Kerr's PLEASE DON'T EAT THE DASIES, and Shirley Jackson's LIFE AMONG THE SAVAGES are well-liked by girls. Both boys and girls relish anecdotal collections such as O YE JUGS & JULEPS, KIDS' LETTERS TO THE F.B.I., and KIDS SURE RITE FUNNY.

The love story about a teen-age boy and an elderly woman, HAROLD AND MAUDE, is an amusing book which only a few of our students have read. The movie, a local sleeper starring Ruth Cordon, has been playing in Minneapolis for well over a year. In our town you cannot consider yourself a serious movie-goer (this applies to young and old alike) if you have not seen it.

Books which provide emotional impact are appreciated for their comic relief. Comments in the narrators' journals in GO ASK ALICE and AN AMERICAN GIRL, the hockey game and language in general in LOVE STORY, the drug store scene in SUMMER OF '42 are a few. Also mentioned are the father-son facts-of-life conversation as well as the r a c e to the dead horse in RED SKY AT MORNING, the incident in the sex education class which provides the title for MY DARLING, MY HAMBURGER and the practical jokes in THE PIGMAN and BAD FALL. The satire on government in RETIEF'S WAR and the attitude toward religion in STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND are savored by one of our mature readers.

There are three relatively new titles for young adults which are just catching on in our school. All are delightful and I recommend that adults who wish to be reminded of the joys and sorrows of puberty pick these up. ARE YOU THERE GOD? IT'S ME, MARGARET is a bit of nostalgia concerning breast development, the first bra, the first menstrual period, school friends, and family relationships that is unexcelled. Our 7th grade girls have a long waiting list for this title and there will be no respite for the library until we can purchase multiple copies in paperback.

Mary Rodgers, daughter of composer Richard Rodgers and columnist in MCCALL'S, has turned out a wacky number called FREAKY FRIDAY. Annabel Andrews, the young protagonist, has had a set-to with her mother the previous evening. When she awakens the next morning, she is her mother and vice versa. The situations and the dialogue are hilarious. Teachers will enjoy the scene that has Annabel attending a school conference about herself.

DINKY HOCKER SHOOTS SMACK! by E.M. Kerr has four charming, unorthodox teen-age characters, devastatingly funny commentary and conversation, yet deals with serious problems--overweight, parents, mental illness and first love.

What appears as a hodge-podge of titles, tastes and pleasures in the realm of adolescent humor serves to illustrate what teachers and librarians have long known about junior high students. Although grades 7-9 includes only three chronological years, the maturity levels range from the very young to the near-adult. Knowing this places a burden of responsibility on the librarians to provide for all readers and on the teachers to teach to all levels of sophistication. Of course, not all items which kids enjoy would be appropriate for school use. However, in the process of teaching new ideas and concepts, noting young adult interests in humor may be helpful and enlightening to those who plan curriculum.

WRITING HUMOR

Rod Richmond, Westwood High School, Mesa

Humor is difficult to teach. One reason, perhaps, is that when it is examined, it disappears. All you have left are the remains, but just as the cadaver isn't the person, the remains are not humor. Much humor depends upon an instant of something-or-other which evokes a response in the audience that is probably indescribable--and that's about as specific as I care to get by way of definition.

Well, humor is a major part of life. Pundits have tried for years to classify it organize it, define it, and a few geniuses have created it. Kids today spend hours before a television set watching humorous cartoon characters, situation comedies, and stand-up comedians, all trying to tickle the funny bone of the viewer. And most kids themselves are natural comedians.

With all this bombardment by humor and attempts at humor, it is strange that teachers do not make more use of it in the classroom. Some anthologies have a unit on comedy, but compared to the "serious" stuff, the attention it gets is negligible. And humor in a composition class is practically unheard of. Paragraphs, sentences, punctuation and spelling are serious business. Sometimes writing a humorous anecdote is tolerated but that's about all. In my own school, there is a class offered in comedy and laughter which seems to have neither to hear the teachers as well as the students to talk about it. The class has a text, but it "reeks" in the words of everyone involved.

Perhaps a workable approach to the class would be to begin by letting the kids create something humorous; and perhaps a good way to do this is to start with films which are either humorous or contain humor as one of the ingredients. Viewing a film which seems humorous to a person doesn't require that the viewer be able to articulate the humor, but to feel it, to enjoy it. I doubt if there are many people who could explain why a pratfall is funny or why a "dirty old man" is funny or why ridicule done in a certain way by mimicking the "great" is funny. The point is that pratfalls, dirty old men, and mimickings can be funny. The reasons are deep seated psychologically which most of us do not understand well enough to articulate. And in this respect, a kid in a classroom is just like a person, knowing what is humorous but not knowing why. Therefore, the teacher should supply himself with a good supply since no one film will be humorous to all students. And if a student doesn't see the humor in a film, explaining it won't help. As in the case of a good joke, explaining it won't make it funny. An honest laughter or smile (for those too conservative to guffaw) should suffice.

So there you are with a supply of funny films and you have just shown one that lasted for ten minutes. Now What? Let's take a specific example.

Contemporary Film has a little gem called THE VIOLIN LESSON. It is in color, runs ten minutes and can be had for fifteen dollars. I will not attempt to tell you why the film is humorous (I practice what I preach), but here is what transpires between the first scene and the last.

We see an old man, the somewhat stereotyped, disheveled, absent-minded type, who famous artists down through the years have been thanking for making them what they are by having forced them to perfection against their wills. For several minutes, the old man is viewed getting ready for his student, puttering with his bird, forgetting his coat, finally putting on his coat, and opening the

door. Enter one stern-faced, scowling little brat-type in bangs, pushed by his mother. The mother pays, reluctantly, and leaves. The boy and the old man take out their violins, and adjust their music before beginning to play in tandem. Awful discordant sounds. They stop and the old man adjusts the boy's violin. Again, awful, discordant sounds. The old man points with a sympathetic, understanding face to the boy's music. And once again as they play, awful, discordant sounds. The old man raises his eyes to heaven and stops playing. Beautiful, virtuoso violin music permeates the room while the camera remains focused on the old man. As the music continues, the old man places his bow to his violin once again and awful, discordant sounds result. End of film.

It seems to me, there is no need to ask why this is funny (to some it may not be; to me it is hilarious). Obviously the creator of the film felt it was humorous, and some viewers will agree. What is important for purposes here being discussed is that the method of the humor or the thing upon which the humor depends can be seen very clearly. Broadly stated, the viewer is set up to believe one way about 1) the characers, and 2) the situation. The humor depends upon the sudden collapse of preconceived notions at the time of a reversal in both characters and situation. The humor is instantaneous and has been carefully orchestrated. It is an old device of comedy, used to perfection by writers such as O'Henry and Saki. (The same device is used in tales of ratiocination, but for purposes other than humor.)

Other films of humor use different methods and rely upon different sources, but a consideration of the characters and the situation will usually lead to the source without necessarily going beyond the humor, since many films which are humorous or use humor are not really that at all. Many films make the viewer laugh first and cry later. But for our purposed here, such considerations really do not matter as long as the film is humorous. Appended to this monologue you will find a list of films which are humouous or contain humor together with a statement of character and situation with some other stuff. In addition to this list, the teacher has the vast wasteland of television comedy to choose from if the district owns a videotape recorder. If it doesn't and the teacher is a really dedicated person who believes strongly in what he is doing, he can buy one of his own.

So how does this help the kids in the class create humor and eventually know all about it? Students can learn to be humorous by imitation, much the same way that they learn language and practically everything else that makes them who and what they are. Frank Lloyd Wright claimed that you can't teach an art and I am inclined to agree with him. What you can do to provide encouragement and the fertile soil in which it will thrive and flourish. Naturally, the methodology and source of humor in films viewed should be discussed as far as the kids want to discuss them. Depending upon how much time you want to spend, any film could be followed by the reading (aloud preferably)of a piece which parallels the method and source in the film. Such activity would help the student decide which medium is best suited to what kinds of situations and characters, which medium nas what advantages and disadvantages. He can also see how character portrayal, for example, is translated from writing into film.

When you and the class think they are ready and have found a suitable model, they are ready to start creating. It doesn't matter whether their composition is written or on film. And it doesn't really matter if their finished project isn't a winner. What they will hopefully learn in the creative process is just how fragile a thing humor is. They will also learn how difficult it is to be funny, to write or produce really good humor.

From this point, it seems to me, it will be easier to move into a more detailed look at humor of writers and filmmakers alike and discover some of the varied uses to which humor is put in commenting upon the human condition.

OTHER FUNNY FLICKS

"The Critic" - An uninhibited voice views a series of abstractions which he doesn't understand and makes comments.

"The Bird" - A male chauvinist takes advantage of a female: Cartoon.

"The Giants" - Two cartoon characters demonstrate the balance of power.

"The Interview" - An intellectual interviewer tries to communicate with a beat musician: Cartoon.

"Musical Pig" - A pig who sings opera finds himself the object of everyone's appetite: Cartoon.

"The Fat and the Lean" - A fat man and a servile buffoon do symbolic, absurd things on the front lawn: black and white

"The Flat" - Impossible, absurd things happen to a man in an absurd, impossible house: black and white

"An Adventure with a Naked Boy" - A man takes a naked boy on a tram and people react in strange ways: black and white

"People Soup" - Two brothers cook up a recipe which brings funny changes in them.

"The Top" - Human traits of greed and ambition are viewed through cartoons.

"Love Me, Love Me, Love Me" - A hated man becomes loved and loses his stuffed alligator in the process: Cartoon.

"Insomnia" - A man reads a Gothic horror story before he falls asleep--for good.

"Help! My Snowman's Burning down" - An Ernie Kovacs type indulges in absurdities.

"Sergeant Swell" - A Mountie slapsticks his way through a parody of western adventure and rides off into the sunset, sans horse.

SCHOOL RELATED GRAFFITI

Don and Alleen Nilsen, Arizona State University

(in an English classroom) Double negatives are a no-no!
(in a Latin classroom) I came, I saw, I flunked!
The Vatican police speak Pig Latin.
High School marriages are okay--if the high schools really love each other.
(in a textbook) In case of flood, stand on this. It's dry!
College used to be fun--now it's a riot!
Colleges need federal aid: send troops!
Having teachers tell about drugs is like having a nun teach about sex.
Teachers: Remember you're dealing with sensitive high strung children who are probably armed.
Time will pass, will you? Only time will tell.
What a teacher lacks in depth, he makes up for in length.
Due to lack of interest, this 10:00 Lit Class has been cancelled.
Due to lack of originality, this desk has been cancelled.
If I die in this class at 9 AM today, please remove me. I am in the wrong class.
DO NOT WRITE ON THIS DESK!!!!!!!!!
The world's longest hour was spent here.
Help! I'm slowly being bored to death.
If at first you don't succeed, you're about average.
Daffy Duck is alive and well and working in the principal's office.
This desk is real; this class is unreal.
Atilla the Hun is alive and well and cooking at the cafeteria.
This chair soon to come out in a paperback edition.

My IQ is 139.
My grade point is 3.89
I am nearly perfect.

COMIC BOOKS: A LITERARY FORM... OR HOW TO TELL YOUR PRINCIPAL ABOUT SPIDERMAN

Michael D. Fain, Chandler High School

"Young man!! Is that a Comic Book?? You will hand that piece of trash over to me, and you will remain after class!"

Familiar? Perhaps you have had this line delivered to you at one time or another, or there might be the remote possibility that you have delivered this line (or one very similar) to young men and women of your own in your own classroom.

The comic book has been, and continues to be, considered "useless trash." Why is this so? Largely for two reasons, the most recent being the investigations that were served upon comic book publishers in 1954. Along with every other form of media, comic books came under attack during the McCarthy hearings. A second reason for comic book notariety can be attributed to their predessesors, the "penny dreadfuls" and "dime novels." These early "comic books" were scorned because they were designed purely for reading enjoyment and had little in the way of socially redeeming qualities.

The first modern comic books were developed in the late 1930's and early 1940's. These were the beginnings of the format and many of the characters that are familiar to us today. The style of combining an action drawing with balloon dialogue was started and continues to be the style most prevelant today. Such familiar characters as the Human Torch, Batman, and the immortal Superman were founded and have been given what could almost be called the position of "folk heroes." Here again the primary purpose of such "books" has been action packed enjoyment reading for the millions of Americans who were foolish enough to spend their money on such "trash."

But, I say that comics are not trash, and are, instead, a neglected source of materials and ideas. This preposterous notion is not a new one, as now we are hearing of universities that offer credit courses that study a variety of aspects of comic book-dom, and reading teachers who have discovered the value of comic books in aiding the instruction of young people who do not like to read regular literature, but love to read SUPERMAN, STAR SPANGLED WAR STORIES, and SPIDERMAN. (Not to mention a multitude of other favorites!)

There are several reasons for the current use and study of comic books. First, they are no longer totally devoid of socially redeeming qualities. Second, comic books have been around long enough to have established some elements of style, good taste, and even some "respectibility." And third, comic books are a widely read form of literature.

In concern to socially redeeming qualities, instead of a constant string of meaningless, overly violent story lines, the newer stories deal with "now" topics and have messages and morals combined with the standard action line. For instance, DC's BATMAN #100, March '72, deals with the difficulty of controlling heroin traffic and presents the simple moral "heroin in bad for you." Marvel's THE HULK #167, September '73, gives the idea that many times people are feared and hated simply because they are different, and DC's KAMANDI #6, June '73, presents an interesting view of protecting endangered species. Comic books more and more are turning to topics that deal with equal rights for humans in general. "All men are created equal;" even super heros can be "regular folk." (Thor, the god of thunder, is told, "The way I see it, you ain't much different from a guy like me..." by a Brooklyn cabbie in Marvel's MARVEL SPECTACULAR #2,

September '73.)

In the areas of style and good taste we find that "better" comics are using artists who are leaders in the comic industry. John Severin (Marvel), J. Buscema (Marvel), Alex Nino (DC), Jack Kirby (Marvel and DC), and Stan Lee (Marvel) are comic artists with sharp individual styles that represent some of the finest inking in the industry. Not only is artistry important to comic books, but the sources of their stories are becoming increasingly more credible. The most outstanding example in this area is Marvel's TALES OF ASGARD. Some of its stories use the tales of Norse mythology as their direct source. Other comics can be found using the basic concepts of novels and short stories for their material. An example of this is the use of H.P. Lovecraft ideas to power Marvels DR. STRANGE through its most recent issues.

With the improvements of general quality in mind, let's look at comic books as a form of literature. As strange as it may seem, comic books are a literary form that incorporate most of the devices that can be found in "acceptable" literature, plus add a few that are found only in comic books. Each comic book must have an introduction to give the reader the situation, the characters, the setting and the time. It must develop the character identities, the problem or point of conflict. In other words, a comic book has to do everything that a short story or novel must do in order to be effective. And, like a short story or novel, the comic book author may use flashbacks, dialogue, description, exposition, narration, point of view, or any other device that the author fancies. Comic books also come with some special devices that are unique to the comic book form, such as story accompanied with synchronized action pictures, cover and splash page introductions, and cross over of characters (a crossover is the appearance of one comic book character in another's comic book, i.e., Batman and Superman team up to meet a special threat). There is one device that works only in a comic format: the printed sound effect. The comic book works with all of these literary techniques and in a 35 to 40 page format! This means that an English teacher could use comic books to introduce most of the forms of literature in a very abbreviated manner.

Quality and literary viability are important when selecting literature for use in the classroom. There is one aspect of the comic book that makes it even more appropriate for the classroom. This is the aspect of popularity. Surveys have shown that from 90% to 99% of America's children read comics. That's more than the number of children who watch television, go to the movies, or read "real" books except under pressure (ALL IN COLOR FOR A DIME, Lupoff and Tompson, p. 7). One hundred percent of the groups I have asked have read comic books at one time or another. This helps to show that comic books are a form of literature and that most kids already read and enjoy them. The student doesn't have to be "prepared" to read a comic book as must be done before introducing poetry, short stories, or novels. Working with this knowledge the teacher can move quite rapidly into discussing style, form, and thematic ideas. Being familiar with the material also gives the students a bit of added confidence which aids in the understanding and discussion of new ideas and concepts.

The question at this point might be, "How can comic books be used to aid in teaching literature?" They can be used in a variety of ways. Comic books can, as already mentioned, be used to graphically portray the form of a story or the devices involved in its structure. This could be used in a basic introduction to literary form or in a discussion of any specific device used in literature.

Besides their value in discussing form, comic books can be used to boldly

and simply portray concepts or thematic units that are discussed in "accepted" literature. Death could be discussed on the level that it is presented in comic books. How is it handled? Does it symbolize anything? How does it contrast and compare to reality? The concepts of good and evil might be discussed with the demise of a villian or hero. What does the death of this nefarious nemesis symbolize? Evil shall never triumph? Mankind can survive the worst? Or, if you prefer, discuss Spiderman in the terms of the underdog. Why does he always get ranked by the newspaper no matter what he does, right or wrong? What is an underdog? Who might he symbolize? All of the human emotions and ideas can be found in comic books, some in a simplistic style, and others can be very complicated!

Comic books can be used to aid in the instruction of literature in the classroom for as long or as short of a period of time as a teacher finds workable. But, for the teacher who gets really involved with the idea of comic books, there are possibilities for complete courses ranging from two to nine weeks in length, to deal with comics as a literary-media-art form on their own merit.

An expanded course on comic books could include discussion on the origin of comics. (Some experts think certain Egyptian hyrogliphics and Greek frescos are comic representations, and editorial comics and caricatures have been with us since the early 1600's!) With the origins of the comic form, discussion moves to the contributions and influences of comics on history and visa versa. Early comics were usually political in nature and reflected the activities of the particular time. Benjamin Franklin was one of America's first cartoonists who made political cartoons that depicted the tyranny of the British. Moving from early developments of the comic into recent history and development would be the next step. (This would also be an ideal place to start a less comprehensive course on comics as it would be easier to find material on the recent forms and people are already familiar with the current forms that comics take) The discussion can move to the contemporary form of comics and the development of comic books imparticular. Contemporary influences of society on comic books, and of comic books upon society, can be traced with some ease, especially with the assistance of such books as Daniels' COMIX: A HISTORY OF COMIC BOOKS IN AMERICA, a very comprehensive history of the modern comic book, and Lupoff and Thompson's ALL IN COLOR FOR A DIME, which is a collection of essays on comic books approached from three angles: nostalgia, bibliography, and critical social-literary-artistic comment.

Such a course could discuss comic book style as an artistic-literary genre in its own right. What is comic book style? What differentiates it from all other literary genre? Do individual authors and artists have their own distinctive styles? What makes the style of comic books legitimate?

The possible final project and overall goal of an extensive course like this could be to have the students create their own comic book. The class could establish their own set of criteria (their own Comic Book Code Authority, so to speak) for the development of their comic book. They could establish their own artistic and literary requirements and construct the grading criteria for the course.

Most persons won't get so excited about the idea of comic books as to attempt to institute a course in them, but I do hope that more people will look at them as a possible instructional tool. Of course, not all comic books are worth consideration, (neither are all poems, novels, or short stories!) but the ones that are should be looked at as potential wells of resource material. Why?

Because they do have action, colorful, and they are exciting! They are a form of literature that no one seriously considers to be literature. They can have possibilities for aiding in the instruction of a multitude of English related topics, since its a new idea, you're imagination is the limit to what you can attempt to apply it to.

I'm not suggesting that comic books can be used by everyone to do everything. But, I do say they have a lot of very exciting possibilities.

Some of the books you need to look for if you are interested in expanding your knowledge on the subject are:

Pierre Couperie, A HISTORY OF THE COMIC STRIP, NY: Crown, 1968.
Thomas Craven, CARTOON CAVALCADE, NY: Simon and Shuster, 1943.
Les Daniels, COMIX: A HISTORY OF COMIC BOOKS IN AMERICA, NY: Bonanza Books, 1971.
Jules Feiffer, THE GREAT COMIC BOOK HEROES, NY: Dial, 1965.
E.H. Gombrich, MEDIATIONS ON A HOBBY HORSE AND OTHER CRITICAL ESSAYS ON THE THEORY OF ART, London: Phaidon, 1971. (Chap. 12 is a discussion of early comic origins and influences.)
Dick Lupoff and Don Thompson (eds.), ALL IN COLOR FOR A DIME, New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1970.
Robert M. Overstreet, THE COMIC BOOK PRICE GUIDE, Cleveland, Tennesse, 1970.
George Perry and Alan Aldridge, THE PENGUIN BOOK OF COMICS, Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, 1967.
James Steranko, HISTORY OF COMICS, Reading, Penn: Supergraphics, 1970.
Fredric Wertham, SEDUCTION OF THE INNOCENT, NY: Rinehart, 1954.
David Manning White and Robert H. Abel (eds.), THE FUNNIES: AN AMERICAN IDOM, NY: Free Press, 1963.

BOCCACCIO, CHAUCER, AND LUTHER: AN HISTORICAL APPROACH TO SATIRE

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"The true end of satire," writes John Dryden in the preface to Part I of ABSALOM AND ACHITOPHEL, "is the amendment of vices by correction." (THE WORKS OF JOHN DONNE, ed. H. T. Swedenberg, Jr., Berkeley: U of California Press, 1972, II, p. 5) An even stronger proponent of the power of satire was Gilbert Cannan, who adds, "No tyrant, no tyrannous idea ever came crashing to earth but it was first wounded with the shafts of satire....." (Quoted in David Worcester's THE ART OF SATIRE, N Y, 1960, p. 146) Whenever one thinks of satire as an aid in effecting social, political, or economic changes, one usually thinks of the novels of Dickens (HARD TIMES, et al.) and the Reform Bills of 1867 and 1882 or Shaw's Fabian socialism and the economic system of present-day England. However, centuries earlier, we can perceive what appears to be a direct link between the satire within the novella tradition of the Renaissance and the religious ferment of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that culminated in the Reformation. (Unfortunately, the Renaissance novella, which attracted the finest of writers like Boccaccio, Chaucer, Cervantes, Marguerite of Navarre, Matteo Bandello and Giraldi Cinzio, has been virtually ignored by scholars and teachers. No comprehensive book-length study of the subject exists in English, and the only English-language anthology of the novella, the uneven PALACE OF PLEASURE, ed. Maurice Valency and Harry Levtow, NY, 1960, is now out of print. In fact, most novella collections either have never been translated fully, if at all, or exist in old translations that are also now out of print. Hopefully, the full-length study of the novella that Robert J. Clements of New York University and I are co-authoring and an anthology that will probably evolve from that project will help fill this glaring gap that currently exists in literary scholarship.) More specifically, for the purposes of this article, one can isolate many parallels between the religious satire of Boccaccio's DECAMERON (c. 1350) and Chaucer's CANTERBURY TALES (c. 1390) and the later theological positions of Martin Luther (1483-1546). (The editions used in this article are as follows: Giovanni Boccaccio's THE DECAMERON, trans. Richard Aldington, NY, 1967; Geoffrey Chaucer's THE CANTERBURY TALES, trans. Nevill Coghill, Baltimore, 1960; and Martin Luther's LUTHER'S WORKS, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann, 55 vols, Philadelphia, 1958-1967)

In the second tale of Day One of THE DECAMERON Boccaccio sketches a general overview of the corruption of the Church of Rome, interestingly offering a story that borders on satiric invective rather than the burlesque satire--or "distorting mirror" as Gilbert Highet calls it (THE ANATOMY OF SATIRE, Princeton, 1962, p. 151) usually found in the novella tradition. The merchant Giannotto zealously strives to convert to Christian truth his Jewish friend Abraham, who at long last agrees to journey to Rome to see at first hand the saintly behavior of the pope and cardinals before deciding upon conversion. When he returns, Abraham (Boccaccio's ironic mask) tells Giannotto that he observed at the Holy Court "no sanctity, no devotion, no good works or examples of life," but only "lechery, avarice, gluttony, and such like things aye and worse (if there can be any worse)...." However, Abraham continues, the flourishing of such corruption indicates that the Christian God who supports this activity must be stronger than all the other gods, separately and collectively, who are surely trying to destroy such a wicked city. Therefore, the erstwhile Jew concludes that nothing can prevent him from becoming a Christian. "Let us go to a church, and there I will be baptised in accordance with the usual rites of your Holy Faith" (p. 58).

Abraham's experience at Rome strongly anticipates Luther's youthful visit to

the Holy City, but with vastly different consequences. The biographer Roland H. Bainton describes the young priest's trip to Rome in 1510 thus:

> Disillusionments of various sorts set in at once. Some of them were irrelevant to his immediate problem but were concomitants in his total distress. On making his general confession he was dismayed by the incompetence of the confessor. The abysmal ignorance, frivolity, and levity of the Italian priests stupefied him. They could rattle through six or seven masses while he was saying one. And when he was only at the Gospel, they had finished and would say to him, "Passa! Passa!"--"Get a move on!". . . Such a practice lent itself to irreverence. Some of the Italian clergy, however, were flippantly unbelieving and would address the sacrament saying,"Bread art thou and bread thou wilt remain, and wine art thou and wine thou wilt remain." To a devout believer from the unsophisticated Northland such disclosures were truly shocking... At the same time he was horrified to hear that if there were a hell Rome was built upon it. He need not have been a scandalmonger to know that the district of ill fame was frequented by ecclesiastics. He heard there were those who considered themselves virtuous because they confined themselves to women. (HERE I STAND: A LIFE OF MARTIN LUTHER, NY, 1950, pp. 37-38)

Ten years later, in TO THE CHRISTIAN NOBILITY OF THE GERMAN NOBILITY OF THE GERMAN NATION, looking back upon his pilgrimage, Luther writes:

> At Rome men do not find a good example, but, on the contrary, pure scandal. The Romanists themselves devised the saying, "The nearer to Rome, the worse the Christians." After a pilgrimage to Rome men bring back with them contempt for God and his commandments...The pilgrims have brought back such a pretty mess of experiences from Rome that it would be better never to have seen Rome or known anything about it. (XLIV, 170)

A more specific satirical attack is levelled by Boccaccio in the very first tale of Day One, in which he pokes probably blasphemous fun at the sacred institutions of confession and the canonization of saints. Ser Ciappelletto, a liar, blasphemer, glutton, lecher, thief, and gambler--indeed, "perhaps the wickedest man ever born" (pp. 45-46)--deceives a gullible friar with a false confession on his death-bed. After his death, the fame of his sanctity increases until he becomes known as Saint Ciappelletto. Luther also saw the weakness of the penitential system. Hence in TABLE TALK he stresses that God not the priest is the confessor: "Christ sits there, Christ listens, Christ answers, not a man" (LIV, 394). Luther goes so far as to demand in TO THE CHRISTIAN NOBILITY OF THE GERMAN NATION that mendicants be relieved of hearing confession (XLIV, 172) and in THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY even to include penance among the sacraments to be eliminated (XXVI, 81-90). As for the canonization and worship of saints, Luther sought to minimize if not completely obliterate both. Arguing that only money and reputation are sought through canonization, he tells the German nobels, "My advice is to let the saints canonize themselves. Indeed, it is God alone who should canonize them" (XLIV, 187). For Luther, it is, in fact, God who is to be worshipped not the saints' in THE JUDGMENT OF MARTIN LUTHER ON MONASTIC VOWS he writes:

> The true way to salvation is to be subject to God.....For we see in the followers of the saints nothing but a tumultuous confusion of works which they have seen in the saints. (XLIV, 271)

Boccaccio, Chaucer, and Luther, each in his own way, all assaulted the practice of selling indulgences and relics. Boccaccio tells of the conniving Fra Cipolla in the tenth tale of Day Six. The friar is about to show some peasants a feather from a parrot's tail which he claims is a feather dropped by

the Angel Gabriel in the bedroom of the Virgin Mary when he came to make the Annunciation to her. When he realizes that some local rogues have replaced the feather with a piece of charcoal, the quick-witted Cipolla informs the people that he has mistakenly brought with him one of the coals over which Saint Lorenzo was burned. Swearing that whoever touches the charcoal will be secure from fire for a whole year, the friar thereupon collects offerings far larger than usual.

In THE CANTERBURY TALES it is the Pardoner who deceives the ignorant with false relics. Chaucer writes of this cheat:

> There was no pardoner of equal grace
> For in his trunk he had a pillow case
> Which he asserted was Our Lady's veil.
> He said he had a gobbet of the sail
> Saint Peter had the time when he made bold
> To walk the waves, till Jesus Christ took hold.
> He had a cross of metal set with stones
> And, in a glass, a rubble of pigs' bones.
> And with these relics, any time he found
> Some poor up-country parson to astound,
> On one short day, in money down, he drew
> More than the parson in a month or two,
> And by his flatteries and prevarication
> Made monkeys of the priest and congregation.
>
> (p. 38)

Luther is quoted in TABLE TALK as saying,

> It is claimed that the head of St. John the Baptist is in Rome, although histories show that the Saracens opened John's grave and burned everything to powder. Yet the pope is not ashamed of his lies. So with reference to other relics like the nails and the wood of the cross--they are the greatest lies. (LIV, 131)

Theologically speaking, Luther expounds upon the evils of relics and indulgences in his NINETY-FIVE THESES and EXPLANATIONS of the NINETY-FIVE THESES. His first point is that they deflect us from our rightful course: people begin to strive to obtain indulgences rather than worship God. Secondly, indulgences induce complacency and imperil salvation, for they encourage people to lose fear in God, resulting in a false sense of security. Finally, Luther states that it is written that only God can remit guilt and therefore that indulgences per se are useless if not positively harmful (XXI, 17-33 and 77-252).

Chaucer, like Luther, also inveighed against the enervating restrictions of monastic life. In his description of the Monk, Chaucer notes how the holy man chose to ignore the rules of his order so that he could pursue the pleasures of the hunt, and in another rare example of satiric invective in the novella tradition the poet drops his narrator's mask and heartily seconds the monk's views:

> The Rule of good St. Benet or St. Maur
> As old and strict he tended to ignore;
> He let go by the things of yesterday
> And took the modern world's more spacious way.
> He did not rate that text at a plucked hen
> Which says that hunters are not holy men
> And that a monk uncloistered is a mere
> Fish out of water, flapping on the pier,

That is to say a monk out of his cloister.
That was a text he held not worth an oyster;
And I agreed and said his views were sound;
Was he to study till his head went round
Poring over books in cloisters? Must he toil
As Austin bade and till the very soil?
Was he to leave the world upon the shelf?
Let Austin have his labour to himself.

(p. 24)

Throughout TABLE TALK are registered caustic remarks against monks and the sterility of monastic life. Luther at one point cries out, "Away with monks and hermits! These are the inventions of Satan because they exist apart from all the godly ordinances and arrangements of God" (LIV, 268); elsewhere he asserts that the "civil work the godly" are superior to "all the fasting and praying of the best and most pious monks" (LIV, 304). In TO THE CHRISTIAN NOBILITY OF THE GERMAN NATION, he writes of the monasteries, "Would to God they were dissolved....!" (XLIV, 172). Above all, Luther believed that the cloistered, inactive life of the monk actually encouraged vices of all sorts. In ON MONASTIC VOWS he concludes, "Thus you see that the monastic life, with all its confusion of errors, lies, ignorance, laziness, deception, and illusion, represents the true Babylon..." (XLIV, 266).

Again, both Boccaccio and Chaucer had reached the same conclusion over a century earlier. Avarice and gluttony are evident, for example, in Boccaccio's Minor Friar who is attached to the Inquisition and who extorts money and fine foods and wines from potential victims of the auto-da-fé as well as in the friar in Chaucer's SUMMONER'S TALE. But of all the vices practiced by the holy men in the novella it is lechery that is clearly the most prevalent. Indeed, Boccaccio, Chaucer, and the other novellists never tire of relating the sexual exploits, both successful and unsuccessful, of the libidinous clerics that populate their tales.

Chaucer's Summoner, we recall, is "as hot and lecherous as a sparrow" (p. 36), while the merry Friar "fixed up many a marriage, giving each/Of his young women what he could afford" (p. 25). Don John of the SHIPMAN'S TALE as well as Boccaccio's Don Felice (III:4), Fra Rinaldo (VII:3), Priest of Varlungo (VIII:2), and Don Gianni (IX:10), among others, all undertake various enterprises designed to trick husbands into relaxing their vigilance over their wives or to deceive women into forgoing their chastity--probably the most humorous of the latter is Frate Alberto's donning wings to persuade a naive lady that the Angel Gabriel is in love with her (IV:2). Boccaccio also tells of the nuns and the gardner they believe is deaf (III:1), of the hermit Alibech who teaches yet another innocent girl to "put the devil into hell" (III:10), and in two separate tales of the monk and the nun who are caught sinning respectively by an abbot and an abbess only to prove their superiors guilty of the very same fault (I:4 and IX:2).

Luther observed the same clerical activities, but with far less humor. To him the root of the problem of priestly lechery was the vow of celibacy. Demanding sexual abstinence and yet permitting social contact with the other sex, he tells the German nobels, is "just like putting fire and straw together and forbidding them to smoke or burn" (XLIV, 178). In TABLE TALK Luther maintains that sexuality is a natural component of man--even the purest of soul are subject to its strivings; hence, for him, the only way to prevent these sinful practices within clergy is to permit clerical marriage:

> When he was quite old, Augustine still complained about nocturnal pollutions. When he was goaded by desire Jerome beat his breast with stones but was unable to drive the girl out of his heart. Francis made snowballs and Benedict lay down on thorns. Bernard macerated his harassed body until it stank horribly. I believe that virgins also have temptations and enticements, but if there are fluxes and pollutions the gift of virginity is no longer there; then the remedy of marriage which God has given should be taken hold of. (LIV, 270)

Gilbert Highet has written that "all satirists are at heart idealists." (THE ANATOMY OF SATIRE, p. 243) If he is correct, then surely Boccaccio and Chaucer must be counted among history's most demanding idealists, for they refused to accept with complacency the clerical abuses surrounding them, but chose instead to attack them with a satirical pen. Moreover, in their criticism of church corruption, confession, the canonization and worship of saints, the sale of indulgences and relics, monasticism, and the vow of celibacy, they clearly anticipated the later pronouncements of Luther and othe Reformers. In fact, the revolutionary nature of many of the novellas of Boccaccio and Chaucer was apparently observed and consequently feared or admired by many. THE DECAMERON was among those books immediately placed on the first INDEX OF PROHIBITED BOOKS of 1559. As for Chaucer, Caroline F. E. Supergeon writes, "He was annexed by the Reformers, not without reason, as a kind of forerunner and a sharer of their opinions with regard to Rome, as evidenced by his keen satirical exposure of the religious orders of his time." (FIVE HUNDRED YEARS OF CHAUCER CRITICISM AND ALLUSION, 1357-1900, NY, 1960, I, xix) Of course, the above is not meant to suggest that Chaucer and Boccaccio themselves singlehandedly brought about the Reformation. Early Reformers like Marsilius of Padua (c. 1270-c. 1343), William of Ockham (c. 1285-1349), John Wycliffe (c. 1320-1384), and the Lollards probably had much more tangible influence on the later religious upheavals. Nevertheless, because they employed for their criticism the vehicle of satire--the sugar-coated pill, entertainment thinly masking preachment, "the best appeal to reason that exists" (David Worcester's THE ART OF SATIRE, NY, 1960, p. 146)--Boccaccio, Chaucer, and the other novellists doubtlessly reached a far wider audience more persuasively than the theologians mentioned above and thus, by lowering their readers' tolerance of clerical abuses and by making the idea of religious reform more acceptable, helped to create an intellectual climate that hastened the Reformation itself, bringing humankind in the process a step further in a journey to an historical milestone.

WHY IS IT FUNNY?

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One of the aspects of youth at all times, and this generation in particular, is the ability to laugh. The natural tendency of young people to have fun with themselves and with others makes them a pleasure to be with and to teach. One of the requirements of teaching, however, is to make these same young people aware not only that they can laugh but also why they laugh. This is the bringing of a certain amount of intellectuallity to the humor of humor.

When asked why they laughed, most teenagers will tell you that they laughed because it was funny. Never mind what "it" happened to be, they found it funny. When pressed as to why, most of them are at a loss. If we as teachers are to take these students beyond the just laugh-because-it-is-funny stage into an understanding of humor and satire, we must be prepared to show them <u>why</u> it was funny.

And that is a good question. It is certainly a question we can ask ourselves as we watch Archie Bunker or Petruchio or read William F. Buckley or Jonathan Swift. Of course, it helps if we do laugh at these personalities and do not find ourselves like earlier generations who had to go to asylums for their daily dosage of fun. I certainly do not claim to know why all people laugh or what the secret formula is to "tickle the funny bone" of the nation. If I did, I would be a writer for Bob Hope or Redd Foxx and certainly not an English teacher driving a second-hand car.

However, I think I can explain to some students why they laugh, and for others I can bring an intellectual awareness to them which they did not have before. To do this, I use an old joke I learned many years ago. It contains several necessary constituents of humor and it goes something like this:

> There was this jet plane flying from New York to London. When it got so far out over the Atlantic Ocean that there was no chance for it to go back to New York in case of trouble, it developed a malfunction in one of its engines. The engine had to be shut down. A little while later, a second engine began to have trouble, and it too had to be turned off. Finally, a third engine went on the blink and was put out of commission. Things began to look desperate, and the captain told the passengers that they would have to throw overboard all of the luggage if they expected to keep the plane in the air. So out went all the luggage and all was well. For a while.
>
> Then the plane began to lose altitude and the captain told the passengers that they would have to throw out all of the seats in order to make the plane lighter. This was done and some more altitude was gained again. Finally, however, the plane began to get too close to the water, and the captain had to ask that some of the passengers be willing to leave the plane in order that the others might be able to make it. There was silence, and then an Englishman jumped to his feet, strode to the open door, and with a cry of "God save the Queen!" left the plane.
>
> This sufficed for a while, but at last the plane again began to skim the wave tops and the request for another volunteer went out. A Frenchman, not to be outdone by an

> Englishman, went to the door. With a cry of, "Vive l' France!" he went out.
>
> Again all was well for a while. But things began to go poorly for the stricken aircraft, and the request was made for a third time. There was a momentary pause and then a Texan marched to the door. Taking a deep breath, he yelled, "Remember the Alamo!" and threw out two Mexicans.

I must admit that the laughter was never deafening, but there was some, and most of the students understood that it should have been funny even if they did not find it so. The question that they must answer is why is it funny?

A voice from the back of the room would say, "I don't know why. It was just funny." That answer is not enough. We must understand and not just experience. Experience is a good teacher but only if we can evaluate our experiences and draw conclusions from them. The mere act of having something happen does not mean that understanding will some with it, and it is the responsibility of the teacher to draw out this comprehension. So I ask the question, "Would the joke have had the same impact if a New Yorker had thrown out the Mexicans?" A chorus of "No's." If that is the case, why not? Well, after much fumbling around, they decide that there is no reason for a New Yorker to throw out the Mexicans. Why not? The act would most certainly lighten the plane, wouldn't it? Yes, but then saying "Remember the Alamo" would not have the same meaning. Why? Obviously because Texas fought the Mexicans and New York did not. So it must be a Texan because there is a distinct historical rivalry between the two. Thus we arrive at the conclusion that one of the reasons that the joke is funny is because of an understanding of the historical events involved in the punchline. If the final line of the story had been:

> Then a Japanese marched to the door. Taking deep breath, he yelled, "Remember Tsushima!" and threw out two Russians.

There would have been hardly a ripple from the class. Even though both are recorded historical events, the Alamo and the battle of Tsushima, the one chosen must relate to the history that is known by the hearers of the story.

The problem of history, or topicallity, is one that plagues all humorists. The great bulk of our jokes or funny stories depend upon an understanding of the incidents and people involved. The TIME magazine story of Mrs. John T. Reges throwing out three muddy hikers from her Old Anglers Inn is not necessarily funny until we know that the men were Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, Senator Paul Douglas, and Interior Secretary Stewart L. Udall. All three were part of the walking craze during the Kennedy administration. Fifty years from now, or in another country, we would have to explain to our students who the men were and the fad that prompted them to take their stroll on a rainy day. The same problem occurs when we get to the drunken Porter in "Macbeth." His soliliquy as he is about to open the door to the insistant knockers is all but unintelligible to students and teachers alike. With the help of copious footnoting, we can comprehend what he is mumbling about, but there is very little humor in the speech for the bulk of us. Thus, we go to detailed lengths to provide a historical background for our students when they read Shakespeare or Shaw. Without some understanding of the attitudes of the people when the works were written, it becomes almost impossible for the young person to catch all of the humor he can. Some of that humor, like the ethnic slur found in THE MERCHANT OF VENICE is as out of date as the ethnic humor of the above airplane story. Still, this does not preclude our telling the student about it.

The problem of the ethnic nature of the joke does help to bring up another characteristic of humor; the use of stereotypes and our understanding of what each simply drawn character is supposed to mean. The old one-liner, "You can always tell a Harvard man, but you can't tell him much," depends upon a certain knowledge of that prestigious institution and the type of man who has become its product. An understanding of the crusty character of the Down-Mainer must be had to fully appreciate his answer to the tourist's question, "This place must be dead in the winter. What do you do after the summer people leave?" His one-word response, without looking up from his lobster trap, was, "Fumigate." Although not ethnic steriotypes, they are stereotypes nevertheless. The airplane story was funny because the big Texan was able to throw out two Mexicans. We are aware of the stereotype of the Texan. Bigger than a normal man from the other forty-nine, he is rawboned and the master of the Colt .45 and the wide plains. Our Mexican comes from innumerable Hollywood back lots. He wears shirt and trousers of baggy white, lives under a huge sombrero, and sleeps--tilted back in a chair--by the door of the cantina. He is a little man whose only line is a passive, "Si, senor." For this very reason, the changed joke with the Japanese throwing out the two Russians would not work. In our stereotyped picture of Russians and Japanese, it is the Russians who would occupy the place of the Texan and the Japanese who would be seen as the Mexicans. We are familiar with the "rugged Russian bear" who has filled our propagandistic pictures of Moscow for many years (about 350 if we are to take that line for proof), and every one who lived through the Second World War, or John Wayne's remake of it, knows what a "Jap" is supposed to look like. It is therefore incongruous that two Russians would be thrown off of the plane.

But incongruity leads to another point; the use of reversal. There must be something unexpected in the punch line or your hearers will not laugh when you get there. If the Texan were to jump off of the plane himself, there would be nothing funny in the story. The hearers would want something more to happen, and they would be correct to expect it. During the course of the joke, a certain traditional pattern has been established. This is the pattern of three's which is used to determine direction. The plane loses three engines and on the third something must happen. It does, and things are thrown overboard. The pitching of material happens in three's. First luggage, then the seats, and finally a member of the passengers must go. The people go in three's. By now, the listeners know that there is a pattern to the events and that on the third try something must happen to the last passenger which will either end or continue again the story. The Englishman goes first. A Frenchman goes to prove that he is as brave as the Englishman. When the Texan steps to the door, we expect him to go for the same reason that the Frenchman did--to prove that he is as brave as the others. Now the reversal occurs. The Texan, obviously an American pragmatist, throws out two Mexicans. In the story, the reversal would not be successful if we did not understand the historical background of the epigram or the stereotypes involved. A story which uses both stereotypes and the unexpected is the one about the priest and the rabbi.

> A priest and a rabbi in Boston had just bought new sports cars and they decided to try them out on the city streets. They went racing around with the rabbi in the lead. Suddenly, a dog darted in front of the rabbi's car, and he had to slam on the brakes. The priest, following close behind, plowed right into the rear of the rabbi's car. Moments later, a policeman came upon the wreck and went up to the rabbi. He looked at him a moment and then went back to the priest. Said he, in a thick Irish accent,

"How fast was he going, father, when he backed into you?"

The punchline, the normal position for a reversal in a joke, is unexpected. Of course, to have said what was supposed to have been said would not have been funny at all. It also ceases to have its full impact if we are not familiar with the stereotype of the Irish policeman, the rabbi, and the priest. All city policemen, and particularly those of Boston, are suppose to be Irish and therefore good Catholics. Being such, he naturally had to find a way for the priest to be in the right. The joke also depends upon an understanding of the almost traditionally congenital rivalry between the rabbi and the priest.

One final point must be brought up. This is the concept of universality. For a piece of humor or satire to be funny through the ages, it must be so constructed as to have a continuing impact. The first story, the one about the stricken plane, is just such a bit of humor. There is no reason for the plane not to be an ocean liner, a clipper ship, or even a Roman galley on the Mediterranean Sea. Moving the plot into the future, a crippled space ship would do. Even though the "impedimenta" and historical references would have to be changed for each situation, the plot would remain the same. A story of this universal character is the one about the two college men who boarded a plane. The college names may be those of any two rivals such as Harvard and Yale, Lehigh and Lafayette, or Arizona State and the University of Arizona.

> Two young men boarded an airplane on a cross-country flight from New York to Los Angeles. They sat next to each other and before long struck up a conversation. The first said, "You must be from Harvard." Surprised that his partner had identified his alma mater correctly, the second asked him how he could tell.
>
> "It's really very easy. You are neatly dressed, obviously well-educated, enjoy good reading, and you have a certain flair about you commonly associated with Harvard men. And where do you think I come from?"
>
> "Oh, that's easy," replied the second. "You're from Yale."
>
> Smiling broadly, the first young man said that that was correct. "And how did you know?"
>
> "I saw your class ring while you were picking your nose."

The ability for a piece of humor or satire to remain current need not have anything to do with its ability to be translated into the present. The truly great do not need it. Such a piece is Swift's "Modest Proposal."

Thus our one story about an unfortunate aircraft yields four of the most important characteristics of humor: historical knowledge of the situation or comments in the story; an understanding of the importance of the stereotypes who are presented as characters or attitudes; the importance of the reversal as a conclusion; and the need for a universally recognizable situation. The best humor and satire contain all or most of these. Of course, they may contain much more and no attempt has been made to develop language tricks such as the pun or "double entendre." Similarly, no mention has been made of the "dirty joke" which has as much universality as any story we can think of. But students have been given four touchstones by which they can measure comedy, and these should give them a basic foundation for their understanding of the construction of humor.

BBL, INC.--A PRIVATE FIRM USING COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION

Edward Curtis*, President, BBL, Inc.

BBL, Inc. is a private firm which strives to keep abreast of all that is current and relevant in educational research and practice. Since its major effort is educational, it tries to profit from insights whatever the source; however, the current competency-based curricula sweeping the educational establishment seemed to have considerable potential for the company, and a decision was made in late 1971 to design a competency-based curriculum for the male portion of BBL's clientele.

The first step in this process was to discover the primary assumptions governing competency-based education. The following three were identified after observation of systems in operation. They were selected as guides for BBL's design:

1. A desired behavior must be broken down into its component parts, objectives and instructional strategies designed for each part, and competence demanded in each part prior to moving on to the next part. The major instructional effort is applied at the part level.
2. While a reality application is sometimes helpful, simulation can usually do the job better because one is able to control for the multitude of extraneous variables reality presents by providing controlled isolated situations for each part. Simulation has an additional advantage in that it is much less expensive, particularly in BBL's field.
3. It is a single behavior which is taught, and there is no need during instruction to observe the effect of the performance of that behavior on the environment in which it will be finally practiced. This ultimate effect is determined logically in advance of the instruction.

In the past, BBL, Inc. has expended considerable sums of money hiring suitable instructors. Instruction was highly individualized, with efficiency being hampered by the person-to-person demands of the curriculum. Competency-based education, as it finally emerged in BBL's design, demonstrated considerable savings and is a financial success. (First quarter earnings are up 168% over last year, with even greater savings forecast for the coming months.) It also cut in half student demands for refunds, since it was easy to demonstrate that failure at any point along the line broke the chain. Unless students complete the entire "string," they cannot expect global competence.

In the interest of communicating how the competency-based curriculum was translated from application in public education to BBL, the following instructional unit is presented. It is the first unit of the "string," following a lecture orientation to the program. It should be noted that the "string" is based on a logically derived division of the global behavior on a "simple-to-complex" sequence.

BBL, Inc. Unit #1M

Objectives: When you satisfactorily complete this unit, you will be able to respond with 80% accuracy or better on a test including the following competencies:

- - - - - - - - - - -

*Edward Curtis is the pseudonym of a teacher who has obvious business capabilities and aspirations. Since he desires to maintain his professorship in addition to his business connections, it is politically necessary for him to remain anonymous.

1. Knowledge of terminology of the human ear, including 27 terms.
2. Knowledge of the varying sensory levels of the three major parts of the human ear.
3. Knowledge of the five steps in tactile stimulation of the human ear with the fingers.
4. Knowledge of the three steps in tactile stimulation of the human ear with the tongue.
5. Knowledge of the six levels of biting applied to the human ear.

Learning Strategies: A kit is provided (#1M) which contains a model of the human ear, a series of readings, and a booklet of learning checks. This module provides instructions; the kit contains the resources. The two must be used together.

1. Get your kit from the laboratory assistant. Check it against the list of contents to insure that each item is included.
2. Read #1Ma in the book of readings. Concentrate especially on the terms so that you will have them mastered and will be able to use them in later work. When you have finished, take Learning Check #1Ma. If you attain 80% or more, go on to nr. 3. If you get less than 80%, re-read the passage and take Learning Check #1Ma2. If you do not get 80% on #1Ma2, see the laboratory assistant for special assistance.
3. Read #1Mb in the book of readings. When you have finished, take Learning Check #1Mb. Follow the same sequence as in nr. 2 above for completing the learning checks. Remember, you must get at least 80%.
4. Read #1Mc in the book of readings. When you have finished, take out the model ear and practice stimulating the ear with the fingers in the manner described in #1Mc. When you have practiced for at least five minutes, take Learning Check #1Mc. 80% is required, as before.
5. Read #1Md in the book of readings. When you have finished, take out the model ear and practice stimulating the ear with the tongue in the manner described in #1Md. When you have practiced for at least five minutes, take Learning Check #1Md. 80% is required.
6. Read #1Me in the book of readings. When you have finished, take out the model ear and practice biting the ear at each of the six levels described in the reading. If you have difficulty determining the actual level of pressure indicated at each level, ask the laboratory assistant for a "bite-level" gauge. A convenient place is provided in your ear for this gauge. When you finish, take Learning Check #1Me. As before, 80% is expected.
7. When you have finished each of the above six steps, you may go on to #2M. Return kit 1M to the shelf and take #2M to your station. It includes a book of readings, learning checks, and a model elbow.

Should the reader desire further information on this system (or, should he desire enrollment in the program), he should write

Dr. Edward Curtis, President
Building Better Lovers, Inc.
7920 Calaway Row
Maxfactor, Alabama 79259

Author's comment. The moral of this story is, DON'T PUT ANYTHING BIGGER THAN YOUR ELBOW IN YOUR EAR.

A BRIEF BIBLIOGRAPHY OF PARODY

Satire can be an effective and witty method for commenting on human foibles, but for many English teachers it is more often a highly frustrating literary genre difficult to get students to understand, much less enjoy. High school students may have problems with satire because they lack background (GULLIVER'S TRAVELS demands considerable sophistication and knowledge of historical and political events to be appreciated), and they often know too little about a genre to appreciate the sub-division of satire called burlesque ("The Rape of the Lock" is honestly amusing and genuinely effective only when students understand the point of the mock epic which does, after all, assume they know the purpose and structure of the epic). But students more readily enjoy and understand another sub-division of satire, the parody.

Parody is one of the most specific and intriguing forms of satire, and it can be a valuable teaching technique or tool for the English teacher. A good parody is in itself a form of literary criticism, for it points up the weaknesses or excesses or idiosyncrasies of a work by imitating the writer's style or diction and by degrading or spoofing the theme or moral tone of the original work. As with all satire, parodies can range from a bitter attack meant to destroy a work by exposing its ineptness and the author's foolishness or stupidity, to a gentle remonstrance meant to point out that a writer has not measured up to his usual standard, to an amused and sometimes nearly reverential work meant to demonstrate only that the parodist has enjoyed the original and wants to have a little fun with it. Students often do enjoy parodies, probably because they like literature which pokes fun at some standard, usually widely anthologized works. More important, students are sometimes eager (or at least willing) to take their own pokes at literature they have not particularly liked. English teachers worried that student parodies will kill great writers for future generations should recall the advice of Ezra Pound. After suggesting that the student be encouraged to try his hand at various forms of poetry, Pound wrote,

> Let him parody some poem he finds ridiculous, either because of falsity in the statement, or falsity in the disposition of the writer, or for pretentiousness, of one kind of another, or for any reason that strikes his risible faculties, his sense of irony.
>
> The gauging pupil should be asked to recognize what author is parodied. And whether the joke is on the parodied or the parodist. Whether the parody exposes a real defect, or merely makes use of an author's mechanism to expose a more trivial contents.
>
> Note: No harm has ever yet been done a good poem by this process. FitzGerald's RUBAIYAT has survived hundreds of parodies, that are not really parodies either of Omar or FitzGerald, but only poems written in that form of strophe. (Ezra Pound, A B C OF READING, NY: New Directions, 1960, pp. 68-69)

The following collections of parodies and burlesques (sometimes the distinction is a little fuzzy) might prove interesting and useful to English teachers.

(1) R.P. Falk, ed., AMERICAN LITERATURE IN PARODY: A COLLECTION OF PARODY, SATIRE, AND LITERARY BURLESQUE OF AMERICAN WRITERS PAST AND PRESENT, NY: Twayne, 1955 (once available in paperback under the title, THE ANTIC MUSE: AMERICAN WRITERS IN PARODY, from Grove Press). Limited to American authors from Benjamin Franklin to Faulkner, this is one of the funniest collections in print. Some standard parodies many teachers will know by Mark Twain and Bret Harte (both on Cooper)

or Peter DeVries (on Faulkner) or E.B. White (on Whitman), but much will be new and funny to most English teachers. The longest with the broadest humor is on Poe and contains parodies like "Ravins of Piute Poet Poe" (on "The Raven") and "A Poe-'em of Passion" and "Ulabel Lume" (both on "Annabel Lee").

(2) Burling Lowrey, ed., TWENTIETH CENTURY PARODY: AMERICAN AND BRITISH, NY: Harcourt, 1960. Limited to modern prose (no poetry), fiction, non-fiction, drama, and criticism. Since parodies of long works are often more difficult to do and still be amusing or effective, this collection is less useful to English classes than Falk's collection, but parodies by Dan Greenberg (on Salinger), Trump Macy (on Miller's DEATH OF A SALESMAN), and Ira Wallach (on Henley's "Invictus") could be worth trying.

(3) Dwight Macdonald, ed., PARODIES: AN ANTHOLOGY FROM CHAUCER TO BEERBOHM--AND AFTER, NY: Random House, 1960. About fifty pages on pre-Nineteenth Century parodies, nearly 100 pages on the Nineteenth Century (nearly all on English writers and a little on Americans), around fifty pages devoted to the genius of Max Beerbohm's A CHRISTMAS GARLAND (probably the greatest single series of parodies by a single author), nearly seventy-five pages on modern writers, and almost 200 pages of what Macdonald calls "Specialties." Scholarly and likely more valuable to the teacher as background material or as highly incisive parody of limited appeal to high school students. The most intriguing and useful section for student use is the section called "Specialities" with the nonsense poems in the ALICE books by Lewis Carroll and their origins (do most English teachers know that most of the ALICE poems parodied works by Sir Walter Scott, Isaac Watts, Robert Southey, and assorted Nineteenth Century poets?), parodies of TIME and LIFE by Wolcott Gibbs, "The Gettysburg Address in Eisenhowese" by Oliver Jensen, and self-parodies of public addresses by Dwight Eisehower and Warren Harding. The essay at the end of the book, "Appendix: Some Notes on Parody," by Macdonald is well worth any teacher's time.

(4) Donlad Ogden Stewart, A PARODY OUTLINE OF HISTORY, NY: George H. Doran, 1921. Parodies of works by Sinclair Lewis, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Harold Bell Wright, Edith Wharton, Eugene O'Neill, and others as episodes from history, e.g., "Main Street: Plymouth, Mass. in the Manner of Sinclair Lewis," "The Courtship of Miles Standish in the Manner of F. Scott Fitzgerald," and "Custer's Last Stand in the Manner of Edith Wharton." Much of Stewart's parodic effectiveness has been blunted by time as writers parodied have been forgotten (the same is unhappily true of Max Beerbohm's A CHRISTMAS GARLAND, Dwight Macdonald calls it an "occupational hazard" of writing parody). But much is still funny and collections by Falk, Lowrey, and White preserve the best of Stewart's work.

(5) Ira Wallach, HOPALONG-FREUD AND OTHER PARODIES, NY: Dover, 1966 (selections from two earlier books by Wallach, HOPALONG-FREUD AND OTHER MODERN LITERARY CHARACTERS and HOPALONG-FREUD RIDES AGAIN). Parodies and burlesques on Hemingway, Capote, Immanuel Velikovsky's WORLDS IN COLLISION, Eliot's THE COCKTAIL PARTY, and Mickey Spillane. The best known of Wallach's burlesques, on historical romances, "The Keeper of the Gelded Unicorn" is included, as it is in many anthologies of humor. A brief and very funny book.

(6) Carolyn Wells, ed., A PARODY ANTHOLOGY, NY: Dover, 1967 (first published in 1904). One of the standard older collections of parody, all of poetry. Much is dated and may appeal to few students, but some hard-to-find parodies of works by Omar Khayyam, Wordsworth, Keats, Poe, Browning, and Whitman. An inexpensive collection of old parodies that should at least be on the library shelves of English teachers.

(7) E.B. White and Katharine S. White, eds., A SUBTREASURY OF AMERICAN HUMOR, NY: Modern American Library, 1941. Perhaps the most famous and certainly one of the best of modern collections of humor and satire. Only slightly better than fifty pages are given to parodies and burlesques, but those pages include Thurber's "If Grant Had Been Drinking at Appomattox" and Donald Ogden Stewart's "The Whiskey Rebellion" and Robert Benchley's "Christmas Afternoon" (a delightful takeoff on Dickens' CHRISTMAS CARROLL), and these are eminently funny and useful for students. Anyway, the book is a great buy for everything else it contains.

The last five books, to complete my golden dozen, may be less immediately useful in teaching parody, mostly because they will appeal to fewer readers. They're still worth considering.

(8) Robert A. Baker, ed., A STRESS ANALYSIS OF A STRAPLESS EVENING GOWN AND OTHER ESSAYS FOR SCIENTIFIC AGE, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1963 (available in an Anchor paperback). A delightful set of pseudo-scientific essays spoofing writers and topics and the reader does not need to be interested in or knowledgeable about science to enjoy the essay from which the book takes its title or "Univac to Univac" or "How Newton Discovered the Law of Gravitation" or many other essays. If teachers or students like the broad humor of Richard Armour's TWISTED TALES FROM SHAKESPEARE or THE CLASSICS RE-CLASSIFIED, they'll enjoy this book.

(9) Frederick C. Crews, THE POOH PERPLEX, NY: E.P. Dutton, 1963. Almost certainly the best known modern parodies of literary criticism (and also freshman English as it is too often taught), with parodies and burlesques of many different kinds of literary scholars and critics and teachers. A joy to read, but only if you recognize what is being attacked, a point true of almost all parodies or burlesques. Especially delightful are spoofs of a Marxist critic, "A Bourgeois Writer's Proletarian Fables by Martin Tempralis," a gutsy, one-of-the-guys teacher, "Winnie and the Cultural Stream by Murphy A. Sweat," and a Freudian interpreter, "A.A. Milne's Honey-Balloon-Pit-Gun-Tail-Bathtubcomplex by Karl Anschauung, M.D."

(10) Edgar Johnson, ed., A TREASURY OF SATIRE, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1945. Only incidentally including parody but an excellent historical gathering together of satirical pieces, one English teachers would find both handy and teachable. Fairly obvious material by Swift and Chaucer and Pope and Shakespeare can be found, but then so can less well known material by Robert Bage and A.P. Herbert and Anatole France and Thomas Love Peacock.

(11) Leonard C. Lewin, ed., A TREASURY OF AMERICAN POLITICAL HUMOR, NY: Dell, 1968. An inexpensive, better than 500 page collection of political

humor with selections by Will Rogers, Finley Peter Dunne, H.L. Mencken, Wolcott Gibbs, James Thurber, Barry Goldwater, Ambrose Bierce, Morrie Ryskind, Artemus Ward, Mark Twain, Jules Feiffer, Russell Baker, John Updike, Dwight Macdonald, William Buckley, Ring Lardner, Donald Ogden Stewart, Art Buchwald, Heywood Broun, Al Capp, S.J. Perelman, Langston Hughes, Harry Golden, Ralph Ellison, Abraham Lincoln, and many other political observers. A really funny collection about our national pastime with some parodies or near-parodies.

(12) William Jay Smith, THE SPECTRA HOAX, Middletown, Connecticutt: Wesleyan University Press, 1961. Of limited value to high school students in this form, but some of the material might be interesting as anecdotes and much of the poetry retains its interest. The book recounts the hugely successful attempts of Witter Bynner and Arthur Davidson Ficke to mock some avant-garde World War I poetry by creating their own school of poetry, the Spectric School, with poetry by two invented writers, Emanuel Morgan and Anne Knish

WHERE OH WHERE HAS ALL THE HUMOR GONE?

Betty B. Whetton, Kenilworth School, Phoenix

In this simple newer world of today's junior high school student, where his clamourings for a literature touching on the moment's treatment of real or imagined social problems are an echo of his elders--high school, college, and even some parents--and are being heard by authors and publishers alike, although not necessarily in that order, there was a note of pain in Julie's plea to "help me find something new that's funny. Doesn't anyone write funny books any more?"

My Seventh grade reading class, all reading two or five years above grade level, and I were enjoying our weekly library session, with most of the thirty-plus satisfactorily pursuing their individual searches.

Her plaintive cries soon drew others to our corner as she continued to explain, exhibiting a much worn book: "They all look like this, so old, and mended. And I've read them all, years ago! Doesn't anyone write new books like those (gesturing toward shelves of currently published teenage fiction) that are humorous?"

In the group gathering around us, anxious to add their own pleas now a spokesman had surfaced, I noticed a number who constantly re-read books others in the class had put aside by this time. When I'd asked a casual Why?, the only explanation was clearly evasive. "It's a good book." or "I like to re-read some books." Since I, too, enjoy re-reading, indeed think it must be emphasized with most reading and certainly with respect to literature, I'd tried not to pry too much. Even the best of readers must some time seek the joy of relaxing by selecting a book or story below his customary level.

But back to our plight of last spring semester. Doris Shamley, Kenilworth librarian, explained to the group that while many new books were indeed written and published for teenagers, few, very few, had humor as even an incidental theme. Knowing how frequently the old favorites were read and re-read, she was constantly looking for new titles to add to our school book orders. Even reading pre-publication copies sent for review proved disappointing to her as well as to other librarians in our district. The publisher might note the humorous aspects of a story, but an actual reading prove it almost nonexistent.

Both of us failed to recall more than a few books from a lot of fifty which an earlier Eighth grade reading class had reviewed for the district, books that could be classed as amusing.

This small group who had finally voiced its unhappiness over an unbalanced reading diet was somewhat mollified by our offer to check further with other sources. Mrs. Shamley promised to bring from the administration library anything which looked interesting.

That evening I checked the Eighth grade reviews to be certain our recollections were correct. It was painfully true. There were many excellent books appealing to a variety of tastes. Each of the forty kids had read at least three, many five or six of the collection so there had been a student review for each book. Books on problems faced by teenagers within family or social groups predominated. Variety came with science or historical fiction, women's liberation, civil rights and war, and even a couple on politics.

Two alone could be said to be essentially humorous: Hope Campbell's MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE CASTLE and CHARLIE DICK by Laura Fisher. Reviewers had even included a recommendation for Campbell's WHY NOT JOIN THE GIRAFFES? as if in an effort to add one more to a very small listing.

Class next day centered around what others read when they felt a need for something funny. The answers were expected. The newspaper comics: they weren't too different from books. You looked for something funny and seldom found it. Comic books: same thing. Fantasy: it's not possible to laugh at or with someone facing a serious problem, but in fantasy the characters are often different enough from us in looks or where they live or in what they do that it is possible to laugh. You can be pretty sure the same thing won't happen quite that way to you. But in the teenage novels, how can you be sure a problem may not be yours? There's nothing to laugh at in them.

By far the largest group was made up of those who had jumped the abyss-like thin line separating childhood from adolescence and were revelling in thennew, more mature reading. Their addiction was to MAD MAGAZINE in any form! It was "cool" and "funny."

Stacks of MAD accompanied their owners to class next day. Until I appointed myself referee several would have read aloud each copy. Most had been reading a couple of years, several were devotees of four years. All said they had stopped checking humorous books from the library soon after beginning. "I'd read 'em all anyway," was a frequent explanation. Friends and older brothers most often introduced them, usually by leaving magazines around. One mother consistently bought each copy as it appeared because she "didn't think it was right for a girl to check them out of the public library." Her mother wasn't aware of the collection she'd brought to school either! A father shared his copies with his daughter.

Polite interest or none at all was exhibited by the smaller group to this sharing, even when they realized I read and was as willing as their classmates to discuss favorite episodes. They wanted full length books! And had rather pathetically resigned themselves to the fact that no one was interested in feeding their particular hunger.

More to reassure myself, I began a random check of several publications offering recommendations for book selection. "Book Marks" in March issue of ENGLISH JOURNAL reviewed seven fiction and nonfiction books: "Witches, whales and winged creatures...Mexican mythology. And then three new adolescent books... a sea story for boys, a drug problem novel for girls, and a social problem novel which will interest both boys and girls." (p. 477)

BULLETIN OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS, University of Chicago Press, and THE HORN BOOK followed suite, nor was the SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL any more promising.

A quick survey of ADVENTURING WITH BOOKS was equally dismaying in its listings of humorous books. With 2,400 entries, mainly recent publications, carefully scrutinized by the NCTE committee wich also compiled this second edition, the book is of inestimable value to anyone interested in books for pre-schoolers through the eighth grade. In checking annotations for about 200 books appealing to junior high interests, I found 19 in which humor was important enough to mention. Publication dates on those few ranged from 1931 to 1968.

Nor was it any better in HIGH INTEREST-EASY READING FOR JUNIOR AND SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS, also prepared by an NCTE committee. The entire humor

section includes six titles! There are 78 listings in the section on Problems and Conflicts with parents, adults, teachers, relatives, friends.

What does it all mean? That his cry, which is shared by many others of our young readers, though frequently not vocalized, just may go on being unanswered in the same uneven way.

If literature has a tendancy to reflect the life styles of our society, then we are indeed boxing our youngsters into a world where humor is relatively unimportant. I can not but recall the dedication and insistence with which each citizen of the United States is being bombarded to drink his three to four glasses of milk a day, regardless of personal idiosyncrasies, because it's good NUTRITION.

Surely the minds of all deserve as much consideration! With such imbalance, heavily weighted in favor of problems, but with little attention to their solution, our children may become too resigned to the hopelessness of it all.

Just as food requires leavening and spicing to raise it above dullness and mediocrity, so does reading need humor to add sparkle and optimism.

As teachers and librarians we can point to the fun books of the past, our own past, and share the delightful humor of dozens of authors with our students. But. Doesn't each generation deserve its own humorists to interpret and record what's happening, now, to them? I think so and really that's what the Julies of today are asking for.

THE COMIC SPIRIT AND SHORT FILMS

Dave Coats, Scottsdale High

Short films may be the most efficient and the most effective teaching tool available for the purpose of raising the sophistication level of an entire class. In the high school English classroom the range of proficiency in basic skills demonstrated by the class is often alarming; the range of individual sophistication is drawn from life experience and observation is often with some piece of literature or with some writing assignment the simple drama of some situation, the poignancy of a relationship, the tragedy in some event or the comic aspects of some experience, indeed comedy itself. It isn't simply a matter of defining terms; it's a problem of explaining experiences and observations in everyday life and the manner in which these things are translated into literature, and a teaspoon of explanation is about all that any teaching recipe can stand. The short films can do it for us, better and quicker. Comedy is as difficult to study as any element in literature so let's use that.

Beginning with films which employ animation and humor we might show:
"Modern Sports Coaching" (Contemporary)
"Animated Cartoons: The Toy That Grew Up" (Film Images)
"Why Man Creates" (Pyramid)
"Love Me, Love Me, Love Me" (Contemporary)
"Alf, Bill and Fred" (Contemporary)
"The Violinist" (Learning Corp. of America)
"Musical Pig" (Contemporary)

Ensuing discussion will include, of course, that several of these films are more than merely humorous, that they have a serious purpose, and that humor is not necessarily "un-serious", and such discussion might even get around the psychological fact that the human mind tends to retain that which is pleasant and suppress that which is unpleasant. The main point of the discussion, however, may be humor itself. Is humor based on incongruity? Surprise? Is humor based on misfortune? If wit is "to the point", then perhaps humor is "beside the point"? Are we able to laugh at cartoon characters partly because they are removed from real life?

Films using live actors or employing filmed scenes of the natural world could be show next. One group might include:
"Turned On" (Pyramid)
"Ski Whiz" (Pyramid)
"Frogs" (Pyramid)
"Six Filmmakers in Search of a Wedding" (Pyramid)

A second group might include:
"Help! My Snowman's Burning Down!" (Contemporary)
"1501½" (Contemporary)
"The Running, Jumping and Standing Still Film" (Pyramid)
"Vicious Cycles" (Pyramid)
"Sgt. Swell" (Pyramid)
"Blaze Glory" (Pyramid)

The first group of films lends itself to discussion and observation of the techniques of the humorous essay (in any medium) on a variety of subjects. This could be used as a self-contained unit in itself. The second group of films could lead to a more profound study of comedy as a viewpoint on human experience. "Help! My Snowman's Burning Down" and "1501½" particularly are provocative in this direction. Is comedy the portrayal of the average or very ordinary human being in some situation which shows his appalling ordinariness? And are human beings then

merely silly creatures with no redeeming qualities? Are we not important at all? Are human beings and their experiences important only in the tragic view of life?

A final group of films might help to resolve some of these questions, or to confuse them further! "River Boy" (Contemporary) is a comedy, but it treats its subject with tenderness. Can comedy be gentle? And what school of literature are we in now? "The Violin Lesson" (Contemporary) is a wonderful and genuinely comic vignette acted out in an unusually realistic style of pantomime. And yet the viewer is aware of a multiple reaction; he laughs at the character yet identifies with him at the same time. We see ourselves in our own foolishness; we recognize our own vulnerability and ordinariness. We hope that from this we begin to see comedy as something more than mere humor.

"The Flat" (Contemporary) shows a very ordinary man, a sort of everyman with a small "e" caught in a mad world full of mean tricks. Is it funny? Yes, it's funny. Do we laugh? Not much. We recognize ourselves and we try to find pieces of our own world in the "flat" which the author of the film uses as his stage. We are an Ionesco character wandering in a Lewis Carroll maze; we are an Anthony Newley Little Chap crying "Stop the world! I want to get off!" But even though we don't laugh much, the madness of it makes it seem still a little like our original concept of comedy. So let's show "The String Bean" (Contemporary) as a final and subtle entry. The environment in which the old lady lives is exaggerated very subtly and seemingly realistically here but achieves a confining prison-like effect similar to that in "The Flat". She attempts something very small and ordinary and a big, cold, uncaring world seems to work against her. She is defeated in her immediate purpose, but, like Josef in "The Flat" who writes his name upon the wall, she starts over again: the life of the String Bean goes on. "The Flat" says something to the effect that the man-made system will crush the individual; it's a political film saying "Flat-dwellers of the world! Rise up!" "The String Bean" is a romantic film, tenderer like "River Boy", saying that the man-made system may not be able to crush enduring spirit in the human heart.

"But I didn't laugh at 'The String Bean' at all?"

"That's right."

"I smiled a little at the end."

"Good for you."

"As a matter of fact, I was smiling through my tears."

"That's right."

"And that's comedy?"

"That's right."

"So how's this gonna help me in my everyday life, Sir?"

"Well, you might enjoy George Meredity, or ZULEIKA DOBSON by Max Beerbohm, or a Woddy Allen movie, or Jonathan Winters, or a Richard Pryor monolog on television. Have you seen JESUS CHRIST, SUPERSTAR or PIPPIN? Read Shaw's PYGMALION again, you'll enjoy it more. Do you know who Bertold Brecht is? Well, while you're worrying about it, go see CABARET! It's a comedy.

And now that we're that far, let's look at a short film called "An Adventure With A Naked Boy" (Contemporary) and sit back and enjoy it."

A FEW SAMPLE PARODIES WRITTEN BY ENGLISH TEACHERS

Asking students to write parodies is not particularly novel, but teachers who ask their students to do so and additionally write them themselves to prove that parodies are possible are rare. The parodies below are all English teacher products. The first is preceded by the Walt Whitman original which may not be well known. The other parodies' sources are unidentified. Presumably, readers will have no trouble identifying the originals.

"I Saw in Louisiana a Live-Oak Growing"

I saw in Louisiana a live-oak growing,
All alone stood it and the moss hung down from the branches,
Without any companion it grew there uttering joyous leaves of dark green,
And its look, rude, unbending, lusty, made me think of myself,
But I wonder'd how it could utter joyous leaves standing alone there without its friend near, for I knew I could not,
And I broke off a twig with a certain number of leaves upon it, and twined around it a little moss,
And brought it away, and I have placed it in sight, in my room,
It is not needed to remind me as of my own dear friends,
(For I believe lately I think of little else than of them,)
Yet it remains to me a curious token, it makes me think of manly love;
For all that, and though the live-oak glistens there in Louisiana solitary in a wide flat space,
Uttering joyous leaves all its life without a friend a lover near,
I know very well I could not.

Walt Whitman

"I Heard in Minnesota a Monster Ho-Ho-ing"

I heard in Minnesota a monster ho-ho-ing,
All alone stood he and pea vines hung down from his shoulders,
Without any companion he stood there shucking tender peas of dark green,
And his pea-vine vest, green tights, and all, made me think of laughing,
But I wonder'd how he could utter joyous sounds standing there with pea pods for a fig leaf, for I knew I could not,
And I broke off a pod with a certain number of peas inside it, and dropped it into my pocket,
And brought it away, and I have placed it in sight, in my room,
It is not needed to remind me of how much I dislike peas,
(For I believe lately I've eaten much too many of them,)
Yet it remains to me a curious token, it makes me think of manly love;
For all that, and though the monster ho-ho-ho's there in Minnesota, his legs astride the jolly valley,
Uttering his nonsense all his life wearing pea pods for a fig leaf,
I know very well I could not.

Robert J. Rossow

"Sneaking Through a Tavern on a Sultry Evening"

Whose brew this is I think I know,
But he is in the men's john, so
He will not see me stopping here
To chug-a-lug his cool, clear beer.

The tavernkeep might think me queer
To stop and sit without a beer
Between the bar and open door
This hottest evening of the year.

He gives his cleaning cloth a shake
As though my order he will take.
The only other sound I hear,
"Where has it gone? I left it here."

This liquid's cool and clear and bright,
But there are other bars tonight
And much to drink before I sleep.
And much to drink before I sleep.

William P. Spieth

I hope that I shall never see
The poem just described to me.

A verse whose feeble lines are prest
Upon another's tortured breast;

A verse that treats of God this way
And tries to force all men to pray;

A verse that is a woman fair
With a nest of robins in her hair;

Within whose wisdom truth has lain
Expressed in lyrics all too plain.

Poems are made by muse divine,
Any fool can rhyme a line.

Sister M. Theresa C.D.P.

"Batman's Ode to Robin"

O Robin! my Robin! our rampant race is run,
Our might has haltered malfeasance, the fame we sought is won,
T V is clear, the sounds I hear, are parents all prevailing,
While Gotham's cave echoes the sounds, VOOMP! THUNK! SPLOCK!
ZOK! assailing;
But O loss! loss! loss!
O the ceasing sounds of sales,
No capes, no shirts, no cars, no masks
For kids to mimic tales.

My Robin does not answer, his punch is rendered still,
My partner cannot banish crime, he has no spring nor will,
From frightening flips, the Joker tips, his job as criminal done,
In awesome dread Cat Woman fled, the black cloud lingering on;
Come alive O guard, ring out swan song!
While I in consternation,
Flee the cave my Robin Soared,
To end our generation

Mary E. Robertson

"A Psalm to my Wife"
Tell me now, in sickening echoes,
Marriage is a blissful dream!
For the man is dead that now knows
Things are really as they seem.

Not enjoyment, but more sorrow,
Is our destined end and way;
Not to act, until tomorrow
So can have another say.

Days are long, and time is creeping,
And our hearts, though stout and brave,
Still with muffled pleas, are beating
For relief from this grave.

Wives of all men still remind us
They can make our lives sublime,
When departing, they remind us
They won't be home by half-past nine.

Let us, then, be up and going,
With intentions to be late;
Still pursuing, but not showing,
Learn to love, but not to wait.

Neil Aronson

"hi yo"
Lone Ranger's
beat
who thundered by
jockeying a milled chrome-silver
stallion
and nicking onetwothreefour badmenjustlikethat
Geez

he was a blast
but what i want to know is
what ever happened to Tonto
kemo sabé

Beverly Cuthbertson

TEACHING COMEDY THROUGH RADIO TAPES

The "golden age" of radio, from about 1937 on through 1950, produced a number of comedy shows that might be entertaining to high school students today, not just as excercises in nostalgia but as genuine examples of humor, many of them still funny today. Shows as different as those starring Fred Allen, Jack Benny, Abbott and Costello, Henry Morgan, or Burns and Allen might be used to demonstrate different kinds of humor or the transitory nature of topical humor. If situation comedies like "Our Miss Brooks" or "The Aldrich Family" or "Duffy's Tavern" or "Fibber McGee" or "Charlie McCarthy" or "The Great Gildersleeve" have sometimes dated very badly, even they can be fun, and other situation comedies like "Vic and Sade" or "Easy Aces" seem almost as fresh today as they did when they first were heard.

A few years ago tapes of old radio shows might have been difficult to find, but a number of companies now offer them for sale. Two companies are particularly good, MAR-BREN SOUND COMPANY (420 Pelham Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14610) and RADIO RERUNS (P.O. Box 724, Redmond, Washington 98052). MAR-BREN charges $5.50 for one hour of taping with reduced rates for two or three hours of tape on the same order, and its catalog includes comedy like "Abbott and Costello," "The Aldrich Family," "Amos 'n Andy," "Baby Snooks," "Bob and Ray," "Easy Aces," "Eddie Cantor," "Here's Morgan," "Jack Benny," "The Great Gildersleeve," "Fred Allen," "Red Skelton," "Burns and Allen," and "Henry Morgan."

Even better buys are the "Ready-Made" reels put out by RADIO RERUNS. Each of these reels comes taped with no custom taping possible. In other words, you take what's already recorded on the 1200' reel or the 1800' or 2400' reels, but the cost of each of these "Ready-Made" reels is much lower than the customized tapings you might request; the 1200' reel costs only $6.50 and runs for four hours (mostly because they record on both sides and both right and left channels--obviously they're not stereo, but then radio programs were not stereo either) while the 1800' reel costs $8.50 and runs six hours, the 2400' reel costs $10.50 and runs for eight hours. Also, these "Ready-Made" reels are usually devoted to eight half-hour shows of the same comedian or the reels are all comedy or all science fiction or all something. Because they are much cheaper and because some of these tapes are potentially fun for students and teachers, I list below a few of the comedy shows available on "Ready-Made" reels.

Reel #1016 (1200'), 8 Fred Allen Shows, all 30 minutes, all in 1948.
Reel #0998 (1200'), 8 Jack Benny Shows, all 30 minutes, all in 1942 or 1943.
Reel #1455 (1200'), 8 Stan Freeberg Shows, each 30 minutes, all 1957. Freeberg may be one of the comic geniuses of our century, and his skit about the censor and the censor's treatment of Freeberg's singing of "Old Man River" (the censor insists on retitling the song "Elderly Man River") is even funnier today than it was in 1957.
Reel #1781 (1200'), has two great hours of Bob and Ray, two brilliant comedians who never fared well on television but who were the bright spots of comedy on radio during the 40's and 50's. Also on this reel are 50 minutes of the "Goon Show" and that's worth listening to. Another reel (#0899, 1200') has a full hour of Bob and Ray, but reel #1781 is a better buy.
Reel #0544 (1800'), 12 "Goon Shows" each half-hour long and each title betraying the lunacy of the show, titles like "The Booted Gorilla," "The Jet-Propelled Guided Naafi." John Lennon, reviewing Spike Milligan's THE GOON SHOW SCRIPTS in the September 30, 1973, NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW describes the wonder and total insanity of this great British radio show. The "Goon Show" went off the air in 1960, but its humor and appeal are far greater today. Kids may have trouble understanding it, but they ought to be exposed somewhere to the wild and brilliant wit of things like the "Goon Show" or its closest equivalent today, the records of "Monty Python 'Flyin' Circus.'"

SHOPTALK: A Column of Brief Ideas and Sundry Thoughts about Humor and Satire in the English Classroom

Two excellent books by Max Eastman, one of the best writers about the theory and nature of humor, are THE SENSE OF HUMOR (NY: Scribner, 1921; reprinted by Octagon Books in 1972) and ENJOYMENT OF LAUGHTER (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1936). THE SENSE OF HUMOR is especially rich, note the few sample quotations below.

"Laughter is, after speech, the chief thing that holds society together."

"For in every case in which a man laughs humorously there is an element which, if his sensitivity were sufficiently exaggerated, would contain the possibility of tears. He is a man who has suffered or failed of something. And although in the humor of art he usually arrives at something else, and that often better than he had expected, in the humor of every-day life he frequently arrives nowhere at all. And the true agility of his comic sense is proven, not in the cleverness with which he detects the point of pleasure in a jocular confection, but in the alert twinkle of welcome with which he greets any genuine and definite void appearing where a pleasure was expected."

"Humor is thus the most philosophic of all the emotions. It si a recognition in our instinctive nature of what our minds in their purest contemplation can inform us, that pleasure and pain are, except for the incidental purpose of preserving us, indifferent--that failure is just as interesting as success. Good and bad are but colored lights rayed out upon the things around us by our will to live, and since life contains both good and bad forever, that very will that discriminates them practically, gives a deeper poetic indorsement to them both. Let us not take the discrimination, then, too seriously. So speaks the sense of humor with a gay wisdom among our emotions."

"Humor is of all things most unlike religion. It fills a similar function in our moral economy, relieving us of the intolerable poignancy of our individual wills. But it does this by a simple emotional mitigation, whereas relition seems to require a great and heavy process in the heart. Religion magnifies the seriousness of our passions, but finds an object which is impersonal, or merely ideal, or in some other way superior to the vicissitudes of fortune, to which it may attach them--binding them all, or many of them, together into one fixed habit of indefeasible satisfaction. From this great habit the mystic derives his fortitude. He declares that all the failures and imperfections in the bitter current of time's reality are a part of God's eternal perfection, and so he makes himself happy to suffer them. The humorist declares that they are funny, and he accomplishes the same thing. They both depart in some sense from the poet's pure experience of life, but they depart in contrary directions. And so it is not surprising that the mystics should seem wanting in the sacred gift of humor, and that humorists should be not often of a prayful turn."

Looking for a justification for teaching satire? Or a rationale for satire?

"A culture without satire is a culture without self-criticism and thus, ultimately, without humanity. A society such as ours, in which the forms of power are changing and multiplying, needs above all the restraining influences of savage laughter. Even if that influence at times seems negligible, the satirist's laughter is valid as a gesture--a gesture on the side of reason."

If you're looking for a good article on Abraham Lincoln and his sense of humor, get Richard Hanser's "The Laughing Lincoln," SATURDAY REVIEW, Feb. 8, 1958, a good picture of a troubled man and his need for and use of humor. Some indication of Lincoln's political reputation and his use as a butt of humor can be found in R.R. Wilson's LINCOLN IN CARICATURE (NY: Horizon, 1953).

For a number of years Bennett Cerf wrote a column, "The Cerfboard," for THIS WEEK MAGAZINE. The column often featured Cerf's favorite limericks. Here are a few of those limericks, some of them doubtles sold and stale, others possibly new to you. English teachers once used limerick writing more than they probably do now, but students might just possibly enjoy some limericks.

There was a young belle of old Natchez
Whose garments were always in patchez
When comment arose
On the state of her clothes
She drawled, "When ah itchez, ah scratchez."

There was a young lady from Gloucester
Whose husband once thought he had loucester
But he found her that night
In the icebox, locked tight;
We all had to help him defroucester.

Two eager and dashing young beaux
Were held up and robbed of their
cleaux.
While the weather is hot
They won't miss a lot
But what will they do when it sneaux?

A doughty young provate of Leeds
Rashly swallowed six packets of
seeds.
In a month, silly ass,
He was covered with grass,
And he couldn't sit down for the
weeds.

There was a young girl from
St. Paul
Wore a newspaper dress to a ball.
But the dress caught on fire
And burned her entire
Front page--sporting section--
and all.

The kings of Peru were the Incas
Who got to be known as big
drincas.
They worshipped the sun
And had lots of fun,
But the peasants all thought they
were stincas.

In an Associated Press news story (July 7, 1973) about the death of Joe E. Brown, a very popular film comic of the 1930's, Brown was quoted as lamenting the decline of the kind of humor he so much enjoyed. "It seems a shame they don't make that kind of picture any more. But it's hard nowadays. There are too many taboos. You can't use any accent or national characteristic, or people will complain. You can't make fun of lawyers or doctors or any line of work, or they will complain. There's hardly anything you can have fun with today."

"The first point to which attention should be called is that the comic does not exist outside the pale of what is strictly human. A landscape may be beautiful, charming and sublime, or insignificant and ugly; it will never be laughable. You may laugh at an animal, but only because you have detected in it some human attitude or expression. You may laugh at a hat, but what you are making fun of, in this case, is not the piece of felt or straw, but the shape that men have given it,--the human caprice whose mould it has assumed. It is strange that so important a fact, and such a simple one too, has not attracted to a greater degree the attention of philosophers. Several have defined man as "an animal which laughs." They might equally have defined him as an animal which is laughed at; for if any other animal, or some lifeless object, produces the same effect, it is always because of some resemblance to man, of the stamp he gives it or the use he puts it to." (An excerpt from Henri Bergson's "Laughter," reprinted in part in Robert W. Corrigan, ed., COMEDY: MEANING AND FORM, San Francisco: Chandler, 1965. Bergson's essay is worth any teachers time, but so is the book generally with essays by writers like W. H. Auden, George Santayana, Susanne Langer, L. J. Potts, Sigmund Freud, Eric Bentley, L. C. Knights, etc.)

If you're interested in the history of American humor, three books are valuable introductions to the field. Constance Rourke's AMERICAN HUMOR: A STUDY OF THE NATIONAL CHARACTER (NY: Doubleday, 1931) is the classic study and it's available in paperback. Walter Blair's NATIVE AMERICAN HUMOR (San Francisco: Chandler, 1960) has almost 200 pages of history about American humor followed by better than 300 pages of selections from the "Down East" and "Southwest" and other schools of American humor. Hennig Cohen and William B. Dillingham, eds., HUMOR OF THE OLD SOUTHWEST (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1964) has better than 400 pages of the predecessors of Mark Twain, many of them still worth reading. Students might enjoy even today some of George Washington Harris' Sut Lovingood stories or the Simon Suggs tales of Johnson Jones Hooper.

Three anthologies ought to be in the library of any English teacher who admires parodies. Robert P. Falk's AMERICAN LITERATURE IN PARODY: A COLLECTION OF PARODY, SATIRE AND LITERARY BURLESQUE OF AMERICAN WRITERS PAST AND PRESENT (NY: Twayne, 1955), once available in paperback under the title THE ANTIC MUSE, has some very funny parodies of Cooper, Longfellow, Poe, Whitman, Henry James, Lewis, Sandburg, and Faulkner among others. Burling Lowrey's TWENTIETH CENTURY PARODY: AMERICAN AND BRITISH (NY: Harcourt, 1960) has sections on parodies of fiction, nonfiction, drama, and criticism. Dwight Macdonald's PARODIES: AN ANTHOLOGY FROM CHAUCER TO BEERBOHM--AND AFTER (NY: Random House, 1960) is easily the most scholarly of the recent collections of parodies though it may be far more fun for teachers than for students. One of the intriguing facets of Macdonald's book is the section on "Self-Parodies: Unconscious" containing works where the author clearly slept as he wrote, he so obviously illustrated the worst features of his writing. D. B. Wyndham Lewis and Charles Lee's THE STUFFED OWL: AN ANTHOLOGY OF BAD VERSE (first published in 1930, now available through a Capricorn paperback) is devoted to unconscious parodies with examples of really genuinely bad writing by some very great writers, Burns, Tennyson, Poe, Wordsworth, Lord Byron, Goldsmith, Addison, and Dryden, among others. THE STUFFED OWL is great fun reading and valuable for the study of style with better than average students.

Old vaudeville routines are difficult to find in print, and they often seem pretty unfunny even if you can find them. An exception is the old "Who's on First?" routine of Bud Abbott and Lou Costello, and teachers interested in reading that or duplicating it in the classroom can find a copy in the May 1973 INTELLECTUAL DIGEST. Maybe the patter has been done to death by almost every baggypants comedian in America, but the routine seems very fresh every time it's read aloud.

"Just as we laugh harder at the jokes of someone we trust and like, great humorous authors establish with us, through their evident style and tact and general wisdom and frequent nonhumorousness, a credibility that makes our laughter, when it comes, deep and sincere. However far mechanical theories explain humor, humor cannot be mechanically produced. It is part, in literature as in life, of human exchange; and any attempt to isolate it as a genre will trivialize it. Just as our tears fatten upon our memories of joy and our dreams rehearse our waking days, laughter draws strength from the heavy atmosphere of actuality. The modes of humor in fiction are various and often lowly; but in the examples I have chosen humor coexists with the noblest qualities of imagination. These authors do not hasten toward our laughter, and the laughter they prompt does not hasten to pass judgment; rather the laughter is allied with the wonder that suspends judgment upon the world." (John Updike, "Laughter in the Shell of Safety," originally in the AMERICAN PEN, reprinted in the Jan. 1972 INTELLECTUAL DIGEST, p. 46)

Readers of NEW YORK MAGAZINE were asked to invent names with apposite occupations, the results being printed in the May 15, 1972 issue. Students might be interested in playing humorous word games like this. Here are a few of the responses.

"Gluteus Maximus--Roman Rear Admiral
N. 'Loco' Parentis--Crazed Babysitter
Rhino Neal--African Bib-game Hunter Who Never Says He's Sorry
Lazar Beam--Israeli Optical Scientist
Miles Togo--Night-shift Cab Driver
Hy Chaparral--Jewish Cowboy
Gittel Long--Jewish Cowgirl
Hans Orff--Touchy German Composer
Home, James--Self-employed Chauffeur

In his "Introduction" to THE ANATOMY OF SATIRE (Princeton: Princeton U Press, 1962) Gilbert Highet makes several prefatory comments about satire, concluding with these words. "The final test for for satire is the typical emotion which the author feels, and wishes to evoke in his readers. It is a blend of amusement and contempt. In some satirists, the amusement far outweighs the contempt. In others it almost disappears: it changes into a sour sneer, or a grim smile, or a wry awareness that life cannot all be called reasonable or noble. But, whether it is uttered in a hearty laugh, or in that characteristic involuntary expression of scorn, the still-born laugh, a single wordless exhalation coupled with a backward gesture of the head--it is inseparable from satire. Even if the contempt which the satirist feels may grow into furious hatred, he will still express his hatred in terms suitable, not to murderous hostility, but to scorn. Hate alone may be expressed in other kinds of literature; and so may laughter, or the smile of derision. The satirist aims at combining them." A great book on almost evety phase of satire, diatribe, hoax, parody, and what have you by a **perceptive critic** who can write. And literature teacher would benefit from reading this book.

One very funny book with a distinctly unfunny title is Marvin Kitman's GEORGE WASHINGTON'S EXPENSE ACCOUNT (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1970), an annotated edition of exactly what it says it is. But since Washington illustrated all the problems of developing an imaginative expense account and unquestionably showed tremendous ability in explaining some of his unexplainably large expenses in the most ambiguous manner possible, the book is almost a text in creative writing about a mundane matter. The author clearly enjoyed his contact with the human side, the very human side, of Washington, a man who has become almost deified.

Northrop Frye's ANATOMY OF CRITICISM (Princeton: Princeton U Press, 1957) is one of the classics of literary criticism and justifiably so. His distinction between irony and satire is a helpful and provocative one, something that might be worthwhile bringing up in class. "The chief distinction between irony and satire is that satire is militant irony: its moral norms are relatively clear, and it assumes standards against which the grotesque and absurd are measured. Sheer invective or name-calling ('flyting') is satire in which there is relatively little irony: on the other hand, whenever a reader is not sure what the author's attitude is or what his own is supposed to be, we have irony with relatively little satire. . .Irony is consistent both with complete realism of content and with the suppression of attitude on the part of the author. Satire demands at least a token fantasy, a content which the reader recognizes as grotesque, and at least an implicit moral standard, the latter being essential in a militant attitude to experience. Some phenomena, such as the ravages of disease, may be called grotesque, but to make fun of them would not be very effective satire. The satirist has to select his absurdities, and the act of selection is a moral act."

"Comedy is not just a happy as opposed to an unhappy ending, but a way of surveying life so that happy endings must prevail. But it is not to be confused, on that account, with optimism, any more than a happy ending is to be confused with happiness. Comedy is much more reasonably associated with pessimism--with at any rate a belief in the smallness that survives as against the greatness that is scarred or destroyed. In mortal affairs it is tragedy, like forgiveness, that seems divine; and comedy, like error, that is human." (from "Some Prefatory Words on Comedy" in Louis Kronenberger's THE THREAD OF LAUGHTER, NY: Knopf, 1952, a wise and delightful study of comedy.)

While it may have doubtful value for many high school students, Henry Hitch Adams and Baxter Hathaway's DRAMATIC ESSAYS OF THE NEOCLASSIC AGE (NY: Columbia U Press, 1950) should interest any English teacher curious about literary criticism. Several selections are on humor and comedy, William Congreve's "Concerning Humour in Comedy," George Farquhar's "A Discourse upon Comedy," and Oliver Goldsmith's "An Essay on the Theatre; or, A Comparison between Laughing and Sentimental Comedy."

Many anthologies of satire are to be found, but two are of more than casual interest and of particular value to the teacher. An old standby is Edgar Johnson's A TREASURY OF SATIRE (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1945), and a newer one is Frederick Kiley and J.M. Shuttleworth's SATIRE FROM AESOP TO BUCHWALD (NY: Odyssey, 1971). Many fine essays on satire are collected in Ronald Paulson's SATIRE: MODERN ESSAYS IN CRITICISM (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971).

The last couple of years Joe Gilmartin (Sports columnist for the PHOENIX GAZETTE) has devoted his entire right-before-Christmas column to reprinting a music review of long ago from the BANGKOK (Thailand) POST. It's reprinted here for one reason, because it does seem incredibly funny.

"The recital last evening in the chamber music room of the Erawan Hotel by the United States pianist Myron Kropp, the first appearance of Mr. Kropp in Bangkok, can only be described by this reviewer and those who witnessed Mr. Kropp's performance as one of the most interesting experiences in a very long time.

It might be appropriate to insert at this juncture that many pianists, including Mr. Kropp, prefer a bench to a screw-type stool, maintaining that on a screw-type stool they sometimes find themselves turning sidewise during a particularly expressive strain.

There was a slight delay, in fact, as Mr. Kropp left the stage briefly, apparently in search of a bench, but returned when informed that there was none.

As I have mentioned on several other occasions, the Baldwin Concert Grand, while basically a fine instrument, needs constant attention, particularly in climate such as Bangkok.

This is even more true when the instrument is as old as one provided in the chamber music room of the Drawan Hotel. In this humidity, the felts that separate the white keys from the blact tend to swell, causing an occasional key to stick, which apparently was the case last evening with the D in the second octave.

During the raging storm section of the D Minor Toccata and Fugue, Mr. Kropp must be complimented for putting up with the awkward D. However, by the time the storm was past, and he had gotten into the Prelude and Fugue in D Major, in which the second octave D plays a major role, Mr. Kropp's patience was wearing thin.

Some who attended the performance later questioned whether the awkward key justified some of the language which was heard coming from the stage. However, one member of the audience, who had sent his children out of the room by the midway point of the Fugue, had a valid point when he commented over the music and extemporaneous remarks of Mr. Kropp, that the workman who greased the stool might have done better to use some of the grease on the second octave D key.

Indeed, Mr. Kropp's stool had more than enough grease, and during one passage in which the music and the lyrics both were particularly violent, Mr. Kropp was turned completely around. Whereas before his remarks had been aimed largely at the piano and where therefore somewhat muted, to his surprise and that of those in the chamber music room, he found himself addressing himself directly to the audience.

Mr. Kropp, appeared somewhat shaken. Nevertheless, he swiveled himself back into position facing the piano and, leaving the D Major Fugue unfinished, commenced on the Fantasia and Fugue in G Minor.

Why the Concert Grand piano's G key in the third octave chose that particular time to begin sticking I hesitate to guess.

However, it is certainly safe to say that Mr. Kropp himself did nothing to help matters when he began using his feet to kick the lower portion of the piano instead of operating the pedals.

Possibly it was this jarring or the un-Bach-like hammering to which the stuck keyborad was being subjected. Something caused the right front leg of the piano to buckle slightly inward, leaving the entire instrument listing at approximately a 35-degree angle from that which is normal.

A gasp went up from the audience, for if the piano had actually fallen, several of Mr. Kropp's toes, if not his feet, would surely have been broken.

It was with a sigh of relief, therefore, that the audience saw Mr. Kropp slowly rise from his stool and leave the stage.

A few men began clapping, and when Mr. Kropp reappeared moments later, it seemed he was responding to the ovation.

Apparently, however, he had left to get the red-handled fire axe which was hung beckstage in case of fire, for that was what he had in his hand.

My first reaction at seeing Mr. Kropp begin to chop at the left leg of the grand piano was that he was attempting to make it tilt at the same angle as the right leg and thereby correct the list.

However, when the weakened legs finally collapsed altogether with a great crash and Mr. Kropp continued to chop, it became obvious to all that he had no intention of going on with the concert.

The ushers, who had heard the snapping of piano wires and splintering of sounding board from the dining room, came rushing in, and, with the help of the hotel manager, two Indian watchmen, and a passing police corporal, finally succeeded in disarming Mr. Kropp and dragging him off the stage.

CURRENT READING: A Scholarly and Pedagogical Bibliography of Articles and Books, Recent and Old, about Humor and Satire in the English Classroom

Although the bibliography below is obviously an exercise in superficialism, it may give the teacher some idea of the wealth of materials in the area, and it might give a few leads to the teacher already knowledgable in the field.

COMEDY AND HUMOR

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